CONSPIRATIO

Fall 2022

Periodical for
Thinking After Ivan Illich

Cover Image

Albert Durer produced a woodcut titled Rhinoceros in 1515 (dimensions: 24.8 x 31.7 cm). In 2003, a group of Brazilian artists generated an enlarged woodcut faithful to the form of the original (dimensions 2.26 x 3 meters). Prints of this modern Rhinoceros graced the walls of different towns and cities. Each cover image of this issue is a fragment of the 2003 wood plate manually printed in De Ester Atelier, 2022.

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the quest for truth cannot thrive
outside the nourishment
of mutual trust

Ivan Illich

About Conspiratio

Conspiratio is neither an academic journal nor a popular magazine. Each issue of Conspiratio comprises essays, thematic articles, book reviews, and occasional translations of texts on or by Illich. All that appears in its pages typifies what Illich called "research by people", which names disciplined studies conducted by those attempting to beautify their own lives by being less dependent, in thought and deed, on the market and the state. For this reason, research by people is open to public debate and contestation. Though conducted through the medium of the written word, the periodical invokes the hoped-for intimacy of con-spiration. For an orientation, consult two essays by Illich: "Research by People" & "The Cultivation of Conspiracy".

Conspiratio encourages contributions from everyone wanting to participate in thinking after Ivan Illich. All contributions are expected to reveal a degree of familiarity with Illich's thought and to engage it in a thoughtful way. All are free to submit essays, book reviews, or translations for publication. Articles contributing to the theme of each issue should be made in response to the call for papers at www.thinkingafterivanillich.net

Conspiratio is published twice a year, in Fall and Spring. It will be available to be read online, downloaded as a pdf file, or received as a printed booklet (for a nominal printing and postage fee). To be apprised of current and forthcoming issues, please register at conspiratio@afterillich.net

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Editor's letter

Once again, the threat of all out nuclear war has become a palpable fear. The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists has moved the doomsday clock to one hundred seconds before midnight, that is, before world annihilation. Since the atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima in 1945, human self-extinction has become an ineradicable possibility. For this reason, it inaugurated the age in which "we also became totally impotent" — the first of Gunter Anders' "Theses for the Atomic Age".[1]

The atom bomb dehumanizes because it does not distinguish between friend and enemy, between civilian and soldier, between human, animal, and rock. It is the *scale* of nuclear war that reduces humans into indistinguishable elements. But it is not only nuclear bombs that dehumanize because of their disproportionate scale. Social techniques like 'Pandemic' and 'Facebook family products' are also outsized. Whereas Pandemic has been shown capable of managing almost all the world's population, Facebook family products shape the behaviors and perceptions of about half that number every month. Both Pandemic and Facebook family products are techniques designed to administer billions of humans. As such they necessarily treat you and me as instances of one or more statistical class. Accordingly, some social techniques dehumanize just as surely as do some material technologies.

In 1963, Hannah Arendt was asked to comment on the question: "has man's conquest of space increased or diminished

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[1] Gunther Anders, "Theses for the Atomic Age", *The Massachusetts Review*, 1962, pp.493-505.

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Samuel, S. Editor's Letter. Conspiratio, Fall 2022, p.6-15.

his stature?"[2] To answer, she noted that the atomic age is built on advances in theoretical sciences that "is being expressed but not described, in mathematical processes". Physics, particularly after Quantum Theory, cannot be described because "the meaningless formalism of mathematical signs" cannot be translated into the "meaningful utterances" of everyday speech. The abyss between these two is unbridgeable because meaningful utterances are ultimately grounded in "human sense experience". In contrast, the "physical world view" has been increasingly shaped by "abstracting from this terrestrial condition". Copernicus imagined he was "standing in the sun… overlooking the planets". Einstein imagined an observer who was not even standing in the sun but "poised freely in space". The perplexities of quantum theory are such that Schrodinger confessed, "however we think it, it is wrong". Accordingly, the world view of physics is so extra-terrestrial that it has lost all contact with the sensible world. We can barely think it much less speak of it in ordinary speech. The same detachment from the sensible world has afflicted the social and human sciences as they aped the physical world view. For example, my risk of catching a viral infection is a notion that is both insensible and indescribable precisely because it presupposes the human body as a statistical entity.

However, as Arendt emphasizes, the meaninglessness of the scientific world view does not impair its effectiveness. The scientific world view requires abstractions unmoored from our bodily and terrestrial condition. Yet these abstractions are made real by the social techniques and material technologies that encase us. "The main problem", said Arendt, "is that man can *do*, and successfully do, what he cannot comprehend and cannot describe in everyday human language." Living in an incomprehensible and unspeakable world of our own making implies that "the stature of man would not simply be lowered by all standards we know of, but have been destroyed." It is precisely this possibility that one must confront today, without flinching.

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[2] Hannah Arendt, "The Conquest of Space and the Stature of Man", in *Between Past and Future*, (Penguin Books, 1968)

The first issue of *Conspiratio* included a translation of the short essay written in 1971 by Valentina Borremans and Ivan Illich titled, *The Need for a Common Roof*. The argument was deceptively simple. Then as now, policymakers worry about ensuring a minimum or a floor beneath which the consumption of goods and services will not be allowed to fall. As the distance in income and wealth between the rich and the poor reaches grotesque proportions — the top 10 percent of Americans earn more than nine times what the bottom 90 percent does — appeals for a universal basic income resound. As the internet widens in global reach and speed, demands to bridge the digital divide get louder. The pleas to increase the state funding of medicine and education intensify as life expectancy decreases in the US and college students fall deeper in debt. The accepted and acceptable solution to most social and economic problems is to guarantee that everyone has the minimum required — whether in companionship or calories.

In contrast, little if any attention is paid to the maximum or ceiling, to the size of socio-political organizations and technological artifacts. The scale of political entities that comprise billions of humans mirrors that of the tens of thousands of manufactured satellites that now orbit the earth to provide high speed internet service. As Illich wrote in *Tools for Conviviality*, unlimited growth of social techniques and material technologies destroys both the social fabric and the natural environment. What needs to be understood and attended to is not guaranteeing the floor but specifying the ceiling, not providing for the minimum but preventing exceeding a maximum. The continued blindness to the appropriate scale, to the thresholds within which the human animal can flourish is most evident in discussions about climate change. Scientific and popular opinion insists that the worst of the coming catastrophe can be managed by greening the economy instead of shrinking it. Few recognize that it is the number of cars and not the kind of fuel they use that drives traffic-caused pollution and social dislocation. Examples can easily be added. It is not a minimum handout that ought to be guaranteed but a maximum income that should be established. It is not a minimum broadband speed or years of schooling or doctor's visits that demand political action but rather setting limits to the dependence on computers, education, and healthcare.

This third issue of *Conspiratio* is devoted to the idea of appropriate scale or proportion. It was a persistent theme in the thought and writings of Ivan Illich from the 1950s on. Two years before his death, on December 2, 2000, I wrote a letter to Marilyn Snell who had published a laudatory essay on him for the *Utne Reader*. She had attended the first *Oakland Table* — a seminar series organized in September of that year under the aegis of Jerry Brown —and wanted to know why it began with a two-month-long public discussion of the distinction between places and space. In my letter, I attempted to describe the thrust of Illich's relevant essays on dwelling, waters, and the commons. What took me four lines to say inchoately, Illich rewrote in one. His essays discreetly aimed to reveal "the proportionality between the size of people, the range of pedestrians, the life-span of dwellers on the one hand, and the size and shape of houses, of streets and neighborhoods on the other."

This idea is fleshed out in the first article of this issue. In his 1982 encomium to Leopold Kohr, Illich discloses that he picked up the idea of the "mutual conditioning of social measure and social form" in conversation with Kohr in the 1950s. The appropriate scale, the fit, the proportion between this and that, is not a mathematically measurable quantity. It is a *certain* quantitative relation beyond which lies 'too much' and below which lies 'too little'. Illich emphasizes the ethical and aesthetic feeling for proportion, its grounding in good taste. He also confesses that he proposed his concept of 'gender' as the "fundamental formal principle" of proportionate social forms — each dissimilar from one other though internally homogenous. Scientific reason cannot capture the sense for tasteful proportions that these people feel and which those people find distasteful. I leave it to the reader to discern his deeper meaning of appropriate scale that manifests as a "*certain complementariness*" grounded "…in a concrete community".

Modernity can be understood as the techno-scientific juggernaut which continues to erase concrete communities and replace them by imagined ones. But as Humberto Beck reminds us in the second article of this issue, Ivan Illich's thought held out the possibility of another modernity.[3] Beck argues that Illich offers a philosophy of limits and shows the affinities and distance between Illich and other thinkers — Foucault or those of the Frankfurt school. He situates Illich within a lineage that links Kant to Camus. However, it is Beck's claim that the fundamental Illichian premise is "that human has a *form*", which demands our complete attention. "Human being" argues Beck, is the name for a "certain balance of biological, historical, and cultural factors". The animal whose "nature consists in the negation of nature" is nevertheless of a certain form. What lies outside the balance of the limits which constitutes the human being as such, is the desert of dehumanization. Dehumanization or the diminishment of the stature of humans occurs when they are enmeshed in structures that exceed the limits of their form — whether in front of a screen or behind a windshield.

Neto Leao's article *Against Pax Oecologica* follows Beck's. If Beck argues that the human being is that which exists within certain limits, then Leao shows the conditions of possibility for being human. Hi analytical argument has the virtues of clarity and synoptic grasp of Illich's concepts. The variety of ways of being human may be formally encapsulated by a principle called 'gender'. But, says Leao, practically-speaking, being human requires three kinds of limits or maxima. Commons names the limits to property, whether private or public. Vernacular names the limits to economic exchange, whether as work or shadow work. Convivial names the limits to technologies, whether dominant tools or systems. The historical record is witness to the endless profusion of proportionate social forms. All these were or are the disparate ways of being human, since all these were bounded by the triple limits identified by Leao.

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[3] Beck's excellent essay titled "Another Modernity is Possible: an introduction to Ivan Illich" is being negotiated for publication at Penn State University Press.

To challenge the capture and dehumanization of human beings is not for the faint of heart. Who today does not think zero is a number? Yet, Christophe Kotanyi asks us to unthink the zero as number if we want to recover the bounded from the unlimited. When you remove all three apples from a bowl, there are no apples left. To say that there is nothing left is true. But to mistakenly equate the absence of apples with the number zero to invite confusion. "Nothing is not a number, and the month has no day zero" says Kotanyi to underscore the historicity of such ideas. Just as one was not a number but rather unity until Simon Stevin (Flemish mathematician, 1548-1620), so also zero did not precede the number one until John Wallis (English mathematician, 1616-1703). It is a matter of ordinary common sense to recognize that three cows are not the same as one cow multiplied three times. That 'one times three' is equal to 'three times one' is a mathematical fiction. Yet this fiction is maintained by presupposing zero as the first number. Kotanyi challenges us to unthink the zero because it "removes the sense for limits". He says the limitless expansion of predatory capitalism is erected from this void.

If Kotanyi asks us to deschool ourselves from a fundamental fiction taught in every classroom in the world, then Gustavo Esteva calls on us to give up the illusion of democracy. Gustavo died on the 22nd of March of this year. He was an indefatigable warrior for the cause of the Zapatistas as a people and as an idea. His proposal of "commonism" was not simply a brilliant poetic act but also captured precisely at least one of the stakes in any world in which it is possible to be human. It is ironic that his excellent essay on commonism was published in the *Community Development Journal* in 2014 but cannot be shared because it belongs to the Oxford University Press. Nevertheless, with the help of his friend and student, Elias Gonzales, Gustavo's unpublished article from 2012 titled *Think from the Abyss* is the fifth in this issue.[4] What is striking about it is the description of Mexico as a failed state. Gustavo suggests that the belief in Democracy is not much different from any other kind of fundamentalism. In the name of Democracy, all manner of illegalities, criminalities, and repressions are visited upon people who want to make their own way, outside the market and the state. Is there not, in his searing account of the Mexican situation, intimations of our own condition and future? Are there not whiffs of an "undeclared state of permanent exception" even in the heartland of Western democracies?

The remaining three articles are of a different ilk. They describe historical and contemporary efforts to become human, to live within communally agreed upon limits. While Samuel and Bavington sketch the centuries-long attempts by finance capital and the State to dehumanize cod fishermen in Newfoundland and Labrador who continue to fight back, Joshua Klein movingly describes builders who not only forge living places but also a historic 'we', by rediscovering the art of dwelling. The short article by Isabelle Cedotti completes the set of thematic articles on the common roof. I wanted readers and well-wishers to know how such a beautiful object as the printed edition of *Conspiratio* is brought into the world. Her spare account of how she orchestrates that production, hides a tenderness of feeling and bespeaks the "certain modesty" that Illich points to in his essay.

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[4] Neto Leao did a heroic effort to translate this previously unpublished article from the original Spanish into English.

The philosopher Giorgio Agamben was kind enough to send me his essay titled *Il Vero Politico* last year. It took time and effort to translate, without using professional services.[5] As luck would have it, that work was completed in time for this issue, to which it belongs. Agamben explores the question of how philosophers — specifically Plato and Nietzsche — think about human affairs. "All that is human is not, on the whole, worthy of being taken very seriously; *nonetheless…*" says Nietzsche, echoing Plato. In his essay, Agamben explores the full gamut of this 'nonetheless'. When philosophers engage in political matters, they should do so playfully, says Plato. Else they will take seriously what is not serious. But what does it mean for philosophers to be playful with non-serious issues like politics? Strictly speaking, a child at play is not playing a game. A game has rules whereas play does not. As Agamben says *In Praise of Profanation*, a child makes a toy out of anything that is at hand, just as does a cat "who plays with a ball of yarn as if it were a mouse."[6] Yet both child and cat do so seriously, with full attention, applying themselves with zeal to the task at hand. Law-making seems to be the highest task of politics. To treat politics playfully implies playing, as might a child, with the laws. This stance finds indirect resonance in Illich's article. In serious recognition of Kohr's contributions, Illich playfully names the measure of appropriate scale, a "Kohr". Kohr himself is more explicit. In his preface to *The Breakdown of Nations* he says, "what I often did was to present my serious proposal in a not-so-serious manner, with the result that on more than one occasion a speaker would express an audience's appreciation by thanking me, not for having enlightened them but for having 'greatly entertained' them" (p.xiv). It is better for a philosopher to be mistaken for an entertainer or a buffoon by those who have forgotten how to play.

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[5] Samar Farage did the heavy lifting to translate Agamben's Italian to English. Fabio Milana offered some crucial corrections. I decided to publish both the original and the translation for the benefit of bi-lingual readers. Crucially, in English one cannot play *play* which would have been the proper translation in many instances of Agamben's essay. Instead, in English, one must play games. However, the freedom of play is suppressed in a game, which is governed by rules.

[6] Giorgio Agamben, "In praise of profanation," *Profanations*, Zone Books (2007).

Wendell Berry sent an advance copy of his new book *The Need to Be Whole: Patriotism and the History of Prejudice* to David Cayley who writes, "Berry's plea for wholeness rests on the idea that a land and its people are, or should be, indivisible". Another way to speak of the land and its people is Illich's description of the appropriately scaled society as one "that can be *encompassed* as a whole". The poles of contemporary political thought — private and public — seem fused, and leaves no room for an encompassable whole. However, between the individual/family on the one hand and the public/nation state on the other, Cayley suggests the possibility of publics "sustained by loyalties, interests, and affinities that are neither entirely personal nor entirely impersonal". Arguably, that which is slowly taken shape around *Thinking After Ivan Illich* is precisely such *a* public.

The last item in this issue is a translation from English and German into Portuguese of Illich's *The Cultivation of Conspiracy* by Silke Kapp. She is among those in the rising Brazilian wave of interest in Illich's thought and writings. The argument in that essay can also be read as concerning the proper locus of the political. Today, the nation state and larger entities — the European Union, NATO, etc — constitute the subjects of serious politics. The 'table' as the site of the political is a laughable idiocy. To engage seriously with politics today may mean to reverse these polarities; to playfully consider the table as the fount and foundation of the politics to come.

The next issue of Conspiratio will be available online and in print on June 2, 2023. The theme of that issue is Flesh/Body. The last two decades of Illich's life was devoted to historical studies of body and sense perception. His collaboration with Barbara Duden is outstanding in this regard. The explosive spread of internet technology and the screens that accompany it, has only intensified as a question what Arendt took-for-granted: that human sense experience is the ground of everyday speech and comprehension of the world. For the upcoming issue, I invite you to submit articles concerned with the question of body and sense perception, both historically and today. The deadline for submissions is March 31, 2023.

Sajay Samuel
State College,
October 2022.

Essays

IL VERO POLITICO: serietà o gioco

IT

by Giorgio Agamben

1. NONDIMENO I

"A Genova, nel tempo del crepuscolo, sentii giungere da una torre un prolungato suono di campane: non voleva finire e risuonava come mai sazio di sé stesso, sopra il rumore di vicoli nel cielo serotino e nell'aria marina, così terribile e insieme fanciullesco, così malinconico. Allora mi ricordai delle parole di Platone e le sentii tutt'a un tratto nel cuore: *Tutto ciò che è umano non è, in complesso, degno di essere preso molto sul serio; nondimeno (trotzdem)...*".

Il passo platonico che questo aforisma di *Umano troppo umano*, che reca il titolo *Serietà nel gioco* (*Ernst Im Spiele*, 628), cita quasi letteralmente, è tratto dal dialogo che, secondo gli studiosi, contiene l'ultima espressione del pensiero politico del filosofo, Le leggi (803 b): "Le faccende degli uomini non sono certo degne di grande serietà (*megales men spoudes*), nondimeno è necessario occuparsene seriamente (*spoudazein*); e questo non è una sorte felice (*ouk eutyches*)". Poche righe dopo il personaggio che parla, denominato semplicemente l'Ateniese, aggiunge: "Io dico che occorre prendere sul serio ciò che è serio (*to men spoudaion spoudazein*) e non ciò che non lo è, e che il dio per sua natura è degno di tutta la serietà di un essere beato, mentre invece l'uomo, come abbiamo detto prima, è una marionetta congegnata per il trastullo del dio, e questa è veramente per lui la cosa migliore; che

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THE TRUE POLITICS: seriousness or play*

by Giorgio Agamben

EN

1. NONETHELESS I

"In Genoa at the time of evening twilight I heard coming from a tower a long peal of bells: it seemed it would never stop, resounding as though it could never have enough of itself over the noise of the streets out into the evening sky and the sea breeze, so chilling and at the same time so childlike, so melancholy. Then I recalled the words of Plato and suddenly they spoke to my heart: *all that is human is not, on the whole, worthy of being taken very seriously; nonetheless* (*trotzdem*)... "

This aphorism from Nietzsche's *Human Too Human* titled *seriousness in play* (*Ernst Im Spiele*, 628) quotes almost literally the platonic passage from *The Laws*, which, according to scholars, contains the definitive expression of the philosopher's political thought: "The affairs of men are certainly not worthy of great seriousness (*megales men spoudes*), nonetheless it is necessary to deal with them seriously (*spoudazein*); and this is not a happy fate (*ouk eutyches*)." (803b) A few lines later, the speaking character, simply named the Athenian, adds: "I say that we must take seriously what is serious (*to men spoudaion spoudazein*) and not what is not so; and that God by his nature is worthy of all the seriousness of a blessed being, while instead man, as we said before, is a puppet designed for the amusement of God, and this is really the best thing for him; that every man

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* This essay was sent dated November-December 2020. Translated by Samar Farage with assistance from Fabio Milana

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ogni uomo e ogni donna, conformandosi a questa condizione, devono trascorrere la vita giocando i giochi più belli (*paizonta… kallistas paidias*), contrariamente a quanto oggi si crede".(803c)

La parola 'nondimeno', esplicita in Nietzsche, nel testo delle *Leggi*, secondo una maniera che caratterizza lo stile tardo di Platone, è espressa da una serie di particelle rafforzative e avversative di difficile traduzione: *ge men*, che Nietzsche, con la sua sensibilità di filologo, rende con *trotzdem*, tuttavia, nondimeno. Troncando la citazione su questo vocabolo, egli sembra suggerire che esso definisca in qualche modo il gesto più proprio della politica platonica, che il pensiero politico del filosofo sia, cioè, inseparabile da un 'nondimeno'.

2. AMOROSO DISPREZZO

In un saggio pubblicato nel 1992 (*Virtuosi del disprezzo*), Alex McIntyre ha investigato la relazione fra le idee di Nietzsche sulla politica e i temi del tardo pensiero platonico. Secondo McIntyre, Nietzsche raccoglie da Platone il motivo del "nondimeno", dell'obbligo di prendere sul serio le non serie faccende umane -in particolare la politica- e lo trasforma in una teoria del "disprezzo" come disposizione emotiva che definisce il rapporto del filosofo con gli altri esseri umani e con la città. Questo non può essere né odio né misantropia, precisa un aforisma della *Gaia Scienza*, perché "per tutto questo si dovrebbe rinunciare al disprezzo: e quanta sottile gioia, quanta pazienza, perfino quanta affabilità noi dobbiamo proprio al nostro disprezzo". Il disprezzo è, infatti, il segno di un'elezione divina e di una vera e propria arte: "grazie ad esso noi siamo gli 'eletti di Dio', il disprezzo è il nostro gusto e il nostro privilegio, la nostra arte, forse la nostra virtù…noi siamo degli artisti nel disprezzo (*in der Verachtung Künstler*)" (GS, 379). Nondimeno -e qui riappare il motivo platonico- questo disprezzo è, nelle parole di Zarathustra, un "disprezzo amoroso

and every woman, conforming to this condition, should spend their lives playing the most beautiful games (*paizonta… kallistas paidias*), contrary to what is believed today." (803c)

The word 'nonetheless' explicit in Nietzsche, in a manner characteristic of Plato's late style in the text of the *Laws*, is expressed by a series of reinforcing and adversative particles that are difficult to translate: *ge men*, which Nietzsche, with his sensitivity as a philologist, renders as *trotzdem* — however, nonetheless. By truncating the quotation on this word, Nietzsche seems to suggest that it somehow defines the most proper gesture of Platonic politics, that the political thought of the philosopher is, so to speak, inseparable from a 'nonetheless'.

2. LOVING CONTEMPT

In an essay published in 1992 (*Virtuosos of Contempt*), Alex McIntyre investigated the relationship between Nietzsche's ideas on politics and the themes of late Platonic thought. According to McIntyre, Nietzsche picks up from Plato the motif of the 'nonetheless', for the obligation to take seriously non-serious human affairs — politics in particular — and transforms it into a theory of 'contempt' as an emotional disposition that defines the relationship of the philosopher with other human beings and with the city. As an aphorism from *The Gay Science* specifies, this contempt can be neither hatred nor misanthropy because for these "we should renounce contempt. And how much subtle joy, how much patience, even how much affability we owe precisely to our contempt." Contempt is, in fact, the sign of a divine election and of a real art: "thanks to it we are the 'elect of God', contempt is our taste and our privilege, our art, perhaps our virtue… we are virtuosos of contempt (*in der Verachtung Künstler*)" (GS, 379). Nonetheless — and here the Platonic motif reappears — this contempt is, in Zarathustra's words, a "loving

(*liebendes Verachten*)…che più ama là dove più disprezza" (Z, 257). L'uomo, infatti, benché spregevole, può essere amato per una ragione superiore all'umano, come hanno insegnato le religioni: "Amare l'uomo *per amore di Dio* -fu questo, fino a oggi, il sentimento più nobile e remoto che sia stato raggiunto fra gli uomini". L'amore per gli uomini, infatti, "senza una qualche segreta finalità che lo santifichi" è "una sciocchezza e una bestialità" perché esso può ricevere la sua misura "soltanto da una inclinazione superiore" (Al di là, 60). L'inclinazione superiore, nella prospettiva della "grande politica "nietzschiana, può essere soltanto la selezione e la coltivazione di un uomo più che umano, che sia in grado di porre nuovi e più nobili valori.

In questa prospettiva, Il tema platonico del filosofo-re è ripreso da Nietzsche nel senso che "i veri filosofi sono coloro che comandano e legiferano" (Al di là,211), perché "il loro conoscere è creare, il loro creare è una legislazione, la loro volontà di verità è *-volontà di potenza*". Secondo McIntyre, il "nondimeno" platonico nel pensiero politico di Nietzsche prende la forma di una società gerarchica, il cui scopo è rendere possibile l'avvento del tipo superiore: "L'ordinamento delle caste, -si legge nell'*Anticristo* (57)- la *gerarchia*, formula soltanto la legge suprema della vita stessa; la separazione di tre tipi è necessaria alla conservazione della società, affinché siano resi possibili tipi superiori e sommi". McIntyre stabilisce così una convergenza fra Nietzsche e Platone:"Il filosofo non cerca semplicemente di istaurare un tipo più nobile di uomo (un'eccezione), ma una relazione di autorità fra il tipo nobile e quello comune. In breve, come potere spirituale che sta alla base di una cultura, tanto Nietzsche che Platone esigono che il filosofo istituisca: 1) un ordine politico-spirituale gerarchico fra le anime nobili e quelle comuni, in modo da creare, attraverso la sua "influenza selettiva e culturale", un tipo spirituale veramente nobile e buono in grado di giustificare e dar senso alla società; 2) un nuovo codice di valori come suprema autorità;

contempt (*liebendes Verachten*) ... which loves most where it most despises" (Z, 257). In fact, although despicable, man can be loved for a reason higher than the human, as religions have taught: "To love man *for the love of God* —this was, up to now, the noblest and most remote sentiment that has been reached among men". Love for men, in fact, "without some secret purpose that sanctifies it" is "nonsense and bestiality" because it can receive its measure "only from a higher inclination" (BGE 60). The higher inclination, in the perspective of Nietzschean "great politics", can only be the selection and cultivation of a more than human man, who is able to set new and nobler values.

In this perspective, the Platonic theme of the philosopher-king is revisited by Nietzsche in the sense that "the true philosophers are those who command and legislate" (BGE, 211), because "their knowing is creating, their creating is legislating, their will to truth is — *will to power*". According to McIntyre, in Nietzsche's political thought, the Platonic "nonetheless" takes the form of a hierarchical society, the aim of which is to make possible the advent of the superior type. As read in the *Antichrist* (57), "The ordering of castes, the *hierarchy*, only expresses the supreme law of life itself; the separation of three types is necessary for the preservation of society, so that higher and supreme types are made possible". McIntyre thus establishes a convergence between Nietzsche and Plato: "The philosopher seeks to establish not simply a noble type of man (an exception), but a relationship of authority between noble and base types. In short, as the spiritual power underlying a culture, both Nietzsche and Plato demand of the philosopher that he institute: 1) a hierarchical, spiritual-political order of rank between noble and common souls and thus, through his "selective and cultivating influence" (BGE 61), create a truly good and noble type of spirit to *justify* or give meaning to society; and 2) a new law-book of values enshrined as the supreme authority;

3) una cultura e un popolo che il filosofo fonda e che rappresenta l'unità collettiva dell'ordine gerarchico" (McIntyre, 194).

3. SERIETA' O FARSA

Il rapporto fra serietà e gioco è per Nietzsche problematico, è forse anzi per eccellenza il suo problema, qualcosa come una questione strettamente personale. Un anno prima della stesura di *Umano troppo umano*, in una lettera a Rohde dell'8 dicembre 1875, egli mette drasticamente in questione il senso e la stessa possibilità della serietà. "Ogni serietà, ogni passione e tutto ciò che tocca il cuore dell'uomo è donchisciotteria (*Don Quixoterie*), è bene saperlo in certi casi, altrimenti di solito è meglio ignorarlo".

Che egli si iscrivesse fra coloro per i quali è bene saperlo e non fra la gente che farebbe bene a ignorarlo è quanto meno presumibile. "Quanta verità può *sopportare* "si legge nel prologo dell'opera composta pochi mesi prima della follia "quanta verità può *osare* un uomo? Questa è diventata sempre più la mia unità di misura". Tanto più sorprendente è che, in questo stesso libro, *Ecce homo*, che già Peter Gast temeva potesse risultare comico e che gli interpreti moderni considerano intenzionalmente burlesco, Nietzsche si paragoni a un personaggio delle farse popolari tedesche, Gianni Salsiccia (Hanswurst), una specie di Arlecchino o di buffone: "Non voglio essere un santo, più volentieri allora un Gianni Salsiccia (*Ich will kein heiliger sein, lieber noch ein Hanswurst*)…forse sono un Gianni Salsiccia (*vielleicht bin ich ein Hanswurst*)". "E nondimeno (*trotzdem*) "aggiunge immediatamente" o, piuttosto non nondimeno -poiché non c'è stato finora nulla di più menzognero di un santo- da me parla la verità". Il rapporto alla verità -la cosa più seria- è inseparabile dall'assunzione di una maschera comica, può dire il vero soltanto un buffone.

3) a culture or people which the philosopher founds and which represents the collective unity of the hierarchical order…" (McIntyre, 194).

3. SERIOUSNESS OR FARCE

The relationship between seriousness and play is problematic for Nietzsche, perhaps it is his problem par excellence, something like a strictly personal question. A year before writing *Human, All Too Human*, in a letter to Rohde dated 8th December 1875, he drastically questions the meaning and the very possibility of seriousness. "Every seriousness, every passion, and everything that touches the heart of man is quixotic (*Don Quixoterie*); this is good to know for some, otherwise, usually, it is better to ignore it."

It is at least presumable that Nietzsche included himself among those for whom it is good to know it and not among the people who would do well to ignore it. "How much truth can he *bear*", we read in the prologue of the work composed a few months before the madness, "how much truth can a man *dare*? This has increasingly become my unit of measurement." All the more surprising is that, in this same book, *Ecce Homo*, which Peter Gast already feared might be comical and which modern interpreters consider intentionally burlesque, Nietzsche compares himself to a character of the German popular farces (Hanswurst), a kind Harlequin or buffoon: "I don't want to be a saint, I would rather be a buffoon (*Ich will kein heiliger sein, lieber noch ein Hanswurst*)… maybe I'm a buffoon (*vielleicht bin ich ein Hanswurst*)". He immediately adds, "And nonetheless (*trotzdem*), or, rather not nonetheless — since there is nobody more mendacious than a saint — the truth speaks out of me." The relationship to truth — the most serious thing — is inseparable from assuming a comic mask, only a fool can tell the truth.

La testimonianza di Overbeck, secondo la quale Nietzsche "non ha mai creduto in sé" e ha costantemente svolto la sua vita in modo teatrale (*theatralisch*), acquista qui tutto il suo senso: "giocando (o, piuttosto, recitando, secondo i due significati del verbo tedesco *spielen*) con se stesso, egli ha per così dire estratto dal suo magazzino scenografico una quinta dopo l'altra (*eine Kulisse nach der anderer*) fino a che l'intero spettacolo fu eseguito" (C.A. Bernoulli, F. Overbeck und F. Nietzsche, Eine Freundschaft, Jena 1908, p.270).

È possibile che anche la follia facesse parte di questa farsa. È lo stesso Overbeck a suggerirlo: "Vi sono stati momenti in cui non ho potuto vietarmi di pensare che (la malattia psichica) di Nietzsche fosse tutta una finzione, pensiero per me insostenibile". Se il termine finzione (recitare è tutt'altro che fingere) è certamente inadeguato, è, però, lecito registrare quanto meno un'analogia fra la rivendicazione della farsa in *Ecce homo* e le lettere del gennaio 1889, da sempre considerate come i primi indubitabili documenti della sua demenza. Non soltanto qui egli definisce le insensatezze che comunica a Burkhardt come "spiritosaggini di bassa lega -*schlechte Witze*- ("sono condannato a intrattenere la prossima eternità con spiritosaggini di bassa lega"), ma nella lettera a Cosima Wagner del 3 gennaio si identifica nuovamente con Gianni Salsiccia ("Mi raccontano che un certo divino Hanswurst ha finito di scrivere in questi giorni i *Ditirambi di Dioniso…*"). Un confronto puntuale fra la frase che apre la lettera a Burkhardt del 6 gennaio e il citato passo di *Ecce homo* mostra una singolare corrispondenza: "alla fine sarei molto più volentieri professore a Basilea che Dio (*zuletz wäre ich sehr viel lieber Basler Professor als Gott*)"; "non voglio essere un santo, (sarei) più volentieri un Hanswurst (*ich will kein heiliger sein , lieber noch ein Hanswurst*). In entrambi casi una condizione personale ("professore a Basilea" o "buffone") è opposta come preferibile a un'altra ("Dio" o "santo"); ma l'evidente tono farsesco del passo di

Overbeck's testimony, according to which Nietzsche "never believed in himself" and constantly conducted his life in a theatrical way (*theatralisch*), here acquires all its meaning: "playing or rather acting with himself (according to the two meanings of the German verb *spielen*), he has, so to speak, extracted one backdrop after another (*eine Kulisse nach der anderer*) from his scenographic warehouse until the whole show was performed" (CA Bernoulli, F. Overbeck und F. Nietzsche, Eine Freundschaft, Jena 1908, p.270).

It is possible that madness was also part of this farce. It is Overbeck himself who suggests it: "There have been moments when I could not prevent myself from thinking that Nietzsche's (mental illness) was all a fiction, an unbearable thought for me." If the term fiction (acting is anything but pretending) is certainly inadequate, it is however legitimate to record at least an analogy between the claim of the farce in *Ecce homo* and the letters of January 1889, always considered as the first indubitable documents of his dementia. Not only is it here that he defines the nonsense he communicates to Burkhardt as "bad jokes"— *schlechte Witze* — ("I am condemned to entertain the next eternity with bad jokes"), but in the letter to Cosima Wagner of January 3, he identifies himself again with a buffoon ("They tell me that a certain divine buffoon has recently finished writing *Dionysus' Dithyrambs…*"). A precise comparison between the sentence that opens the letter to Burkhardt of January 6 and the quoted passage from *Ecce Homo* shows a singular correspondence: "in the end I would be much more willingly a professor in Basel than God (*zuletz wäre ich sehr viel lieber Basler Professor als Gott*)"; "I don't want to be a saint, (I would be) more willingly a buffoon (*ich will kein heiliger sein, lieber noch ein Hanswurst*). In both cases a personal condition ('professor in Basel' or 'buffoon') is opposed as preferable to another ('God' or 'saint'); but the evident farcical tone of the passage from *Ecce Homo* cannot but col-

Ecce homo non può non stingere sull'incipit corrispondente della lettera, che sembra quasi citarlo. Le spiritosaggini di bassa lega si addicono più a Hanswurst che a Dio. Il confine che separa la serietà dal gioco è qui diventato indecidibile: ogni serietà è necessariamente una donchisciotteria, ogni follia necessariamente uno scherzo perfettamente serio.

4. SERIETA' E POLITICA

È il senso del "nondimeno" dei due filosofi che converrà a questo punto precisare. Nietzsche, come Platone, ha ritenuto di doversi occupare seriamente di questioni non serie, quali sono quelle che riguardano gli uomini del suo tempo. Tutto dipende, però, da come s'intende la curiosa espressione "occuparsi seriamente di cose non serie", cioè dal peso e dall'importanza che occorre assegnare a quel "nondimeno". La congiunzione Trotzdem deriva dal termine *Trotz*, che significa riluttanza, resistenza, ribellione: in che misura occorre resistere alla consapevolezza della futilità delle cose umane e provarsi, malgrado tutto, a occuparsene giudiziosamente?

Qui i gesti dei due filosofi si dividono. Nietzsche, che sulla non serietà delle faccende umane ha fondato un'"arte del disprezzo", per potersene occupare deve porsi egli stesso come un buffone, essere piuttosto un Hanswurst che un santo. Di qui l'esagerata teatralità -almeno a partire ad un certo punto- dei suoi scritti, le reiterate apostrofi agli amici, ai fratelli, alla sua stessa anima e ai suoi stessi pensieri, che simulano la forma dialogica del dramma senza mai assumerla esplicitamente. L'artificiosità di questo mettersi sempre in scena o, come diceva Overbeck, di estrarre "dal suo repertorio scenografico una quinta dopo l'altra", gli era costata l'amicizia proprio di coloro che egli venerava di più: è con estrema afflizione che in una lettera a Gast del luglio 1884 riferisce "l'imbarazzo di J.Burckhardt nel dovermi dire qualcosa

or the corresponding incipit of the letter, which almost seems to quote it. Bad jokes are more suited to a buffoon than to God. The boundary between seriousness and play has here become undecidable: every seriousness is necessarily quixotic, every madness necessarily a perfectly serious joke.

4. SERIOUSNESS AND POLITICS

At this point, it will be convenient to clarify the sense of the 'nonetheless' in the two philosophers. Nietzsche, like Plato, felt he had to deal seriously with non-serious questions, such as those that concern the men of his time. However, everything depends on how we understand the curious expression "deal seriously with non-serious things", that is, the weight and importance that should be assigned to that 'nonetheless'. The conjunction *Trotzdem* derives from the term *Trotz*, which means reluctance, resistance, rebellion: to what extent is it necessary to resist the awareness of the futility of human things and try, in spite of everything, to deal with them judiciously?

Here the gestures of the two philosophers diverge. Nietzsche, who founded an "art of contempt" on the non-seriousness of human affairs, must present himself as a foolto be able to deal with them, to be a buffoon rather than a saint. Hence the exaggerated theatricality — at least starting at a certain point — of his writings, the repeated apostrophes to friends, brothers, to his own soul and to his own thoughts, which simulate the dialogic form of the drama without ever assuming it explicitly. The artificiality of always putting himself on stage or, as Overbeck said, of extracting "one backdrop after another from his scenographic repertoire," cost him the friendship of those he venerated most: it is with extreme sorrow that in a letter to Gast of July 1884 he refers "to J. Burckhardt's embarrassment in having to tell me something

a proposito dello *Zarathustra*: è riuscito solo a dirmi se prima o poi mi cimenterò nel dramma".

Per questo il riso di Nietzsche non poteva non assumere la forma del sarcasmo, cioè di qualcosa che, secondo l'etimologia del termine che deriva da un verbo greco che significa "lacerare la carne", confina con l'amarezza. Di qui anche l'ambiguità della "grande politica" che egli aveva in mente, in bilico tra la critica radicale dello Stato e l'organizzazione gerarchica, tra il rifiuto di ogni tentativo di migliorare il mondo e l'auspicio dell'avvento di una casta superiore. Hanswurst si è preso così sul serio, che ogni tentativo di distinguere nel pensiero estremo di Nietzsche la gravità dallo sberleffo è destinato a fallire.

5. SERIETA' E GIOCO

Che cosa significa "prendere sul serio"? I termini di cui Platone si serve -il verbo *spoudazo*, il sostantivo *spoude* e l'aggettivo *spoudaios*- derivano da un verbo (*speudo*) che significa "affrettarsi, applicarsi con zelo, sforzarsi". Nell'uso greco, i termini si oppongono a *paizo*, *paidia*, scherzare e giocare come fanno i bambini (*paides*) e Platone, nel passo citato, non fa eccezione, sottolineando decisamente l'attrito fra to *men spoudaion spoudazein*, "occuparsi seriamente di cose serie" e *paizonta…paidias*, "giocare i giochi", quasi che i significati dei vocaboli in questione fossero inseparabili dai loro contrari e si chiarissero solo rispetto ad essi. È quanto Platone ricorda definendo il gioco "fratello della serietà" (*tes spoudes adelphei paidiai*, Lett.VI, 323d): serietà e gioco sono strettamente apparentati e la strategia espressiva del filosofo deve tenerne conto, situandosi in qualche modo nel medio rispetto ai due consanguinei rivali.

Di qui la particolarità della scrittura platonica, che Dilthey non a torto ha definito come la forma letteraria più enigmatica e com-

about *Zarathustra*: he only managed to ask me if sooner or later I will try my hand at drama."

For this reason, Nietzsche's laughter could not fail to take the form of sarcasm, that is, something that, according to the etymology of the term which derives from a Greek verb meaning "to tear the flesh", borders on bitterness. Hence also the ambiguity of the "grand politics" that he had in mind, poised between a radical criticism of the state and hierarchical organization, between the refusal of any attempt to improve the world and the hope for the advent of a superior caste. The buffoon took himself so seriously that any attempt to distinguish seriousness from mockery in Nietzsche's extreme thinking is doomed to fail.

5. SERIOUSNESS AND PLAY

What does it mean to 'take seriously'? The terms used by Plato — the verb *spoudazo*, the noun *spoude* and the adjective *spoudaios* — derive from a verb (*speudo*) which means 'hurry up, apply oneself with zeal, strive'. In Greek usage, the terms are opposed to *paizo*, *paidia*, to joking and playing as children do (*paides*), and in the quoted passage, Plato is no exception in strongly emphasizing the friction between *to men spoudaion spoudazein*, "seriously deal with serious things" and *paizonta… paidias*, "to play games ", as if the meanings of the words in question were inseparable from their opposites and were clarified only with respect to them. This is what Plato recalls when defining the game as the "brother of seriousness" (*tes spoudes adelphei paidiai,* Lett. VI, 323d): seriousness and game are closely related and the strategy of expression by the philosopher must take this into account, placing itself somehow in the middle of two feuding brothers.

Hence the particularity of Platonic writing, which Dilthey rightly defined as the most enigmatic and complex literary form of all

plessa di tutta l'antichità. In un passo del *Fedro* (306 c-d) -molto commentato, ma dal quale non sono state tratte le necessarie conseguenze- Platone afferma che il saggio non scriverà "seriamente (*spoudéi*)" con una penna intrisa in un'acqua nera e, se lo farà, lo farà "per gioco (*paidias charin*)". I dialoghi di Platone, come i libri di Nietzsche, sono dunque una scrittura giocosa, che non va presa sul serio. Rispetto a Nietzsche, tuttavia, che, come Hanswurst, deve teatralizzare ed esasperare una scrittura che non si presenta come teatrale, Platone, decisamente più accorto, sceglie - che sia lui a inventarlo, com'è probabile, o se dialoghi socratici circolassero già al suo tempo- un genere letterario molto vicino al teatro, in cui la serietà e lo scherzo, la poesia e la prosa, il dramma e la narrazione si tengono in acrobatico equilibrio. Certo la scrittura filosofica deve conciliare due antagonisti e il fatto che essi siano, in realtà, fratelli non esclude, come un greco sa perfettamente, che proprio per questo possa esservi fra di essi una stasis, una guerra civile. Ma come della guerra civile lo stesso Platone scrive che i greci combattono fra loro "come se fossero destinati a riconciliarsi (*Rep*. 471 a)", così -mentre Nietzsche deve continuamente fare dichiarazioni di guerra- i dialoghi platonici sembrano tendere a qualcosa come una tregua o una ricomposizione dialettica -anche se, come spesso avviene, essa si rivela impossibile o quanto meno precaria.

6. NONDIMENO II

Che cosa avviene quando il filosofo è costretto a occuparsi seriamente di cose non serie? E' quanto accade, secondo suggerisce Platone nelle *Leggi* col suo "nondimeno", per la politica. Nella situazione infelice (*eutikes*) che si produce in questa circostanza, Platone è venuto a trovarsi almeno in tre occasioni: due volte, come riferisce nella settima lettera, nella giovinezza e, in età ormai matura, quando accolse incautamente l'invito a recarsi a Siracusa alla corte del tiranno Dionisio. Sotto il governo dei trenta,

antiquity. In a passage from *Phaedrus* (306 c-d) — heavily commented on, but from which the necessary consequences have not been drawn — Plato states that the wise man will not write "seriously (*spoudéi*)" with a pen dipped in black water and, if he will, he will do it "for fun (*paidias charin*)". Plato's dialogues, like Nietzsche's books, are therefore a playful writing, which should not be taken seriously. Compared to Nietzsche, who, however, like a buffoon, must dramatize and exasperate a writing that does not present itself as theatrical, Plato, decidedly more shrewd, chooses — whether it is he who invented it, as is probable, or whether Socratic dialogues were already circulating at the his time — a literary genre very close to the theater, in which seriousness and joke, poetry and prose, drama and storytelling are held in acrobatic balance. Certainly, philosophical writing must reconcile the two antagonists, and the fact that they really are brothers does not exclude, as a Greek knows perfectly well, that precisely for this reason there may be a stasis, a civil war between them. But just as Plato writes about the civil war that the Greeks fight among themselves "as if they were destined to be reconciled" (*Rep*. 471 a), so — while Nietzsche must continually make declarations of war — the Platonic dialogues seem to tend towards something like a truce or a dialectical recomposition even if, as often happens, it turns out to be impossible or at least precarious.

6. NONETHELESS II

What happens when the philosopher is forced to deal seriously with non-serious matters? As Plato suggests in the *Laws* with his 'nonetheless', this is what happens in politics. Plato found himself at least on three occasions in the unhappy situation (*eutikes*) that occurs in this circumstance: twice, as he relates in the seventh letter, in his youth and, at a mature age, when he unwisely accepted the invitation to go to Syracuse to the court of the tyrant Dionysus. Under the rule of the Thirty, "having feelings not at

"provando sentimenti per nulla sorprendenti in un giovanetto", aveva accettato l'invito di familiari e conoscenti a entrare nella vita pubblica, per accorgersi in breve tempo che "questi uomini facevano apparire aureo il governo di prima"; pochi anni dopo, alla caduta dei trenta, fu preso nuovamente "dal desiderio di agire le cose comuni e politiche", ma anche questa volta dovette ritrarsene inorridito quando "alcuni potenti trascinarono in tribunale il nostro amico Socrate…lo condannarono e l'uccisero" (325 a-c). A questo punto, considerando la corruzione delle leggi e dei costumi, Platone fu preso da una sorta di capogiro (*iliggia*, letteralmente la vertigine che ci prende quando guardiamo da una grande altezza) e, rendendosi conto che tutte le citta erano malgovernate, decise (ma Platone dice "fui costretto, *enagkasthen*"- 326 a) di abbandonare la politica per la filosofia, convinto che le generazioni umane non si sarebbero mai liberate dalle sciagure, finché coloro che filosofano correttamente e veramente non fossero giunti alle cariche pubbliche, oppure i potenti nelle città, per una sorte divina, non avessero cominciato a filosofare".

È solo dopo questi due primi fallimenti che la lettera rievoca i tre viaggi del filosofo a Siracusa, dove, la prima volta, ormai quarantenne, incontra Dione, "allora ancora giovane" e gli manifesta "quel che riteneva essere il meglio per gli uomini", senza rendersi conto che in questo modo preparava in lui il progetto di abbattere la tirannide.

È in occasione del secondo viaggio a Siracusa che Platone deve misurare tutta la problematicità del "nondimeno", della sventurata necessità di occuparsi seriamente di cose non serie. Dione, che ha conseguito nella città una posizione di rilievo, lo scongiura di recarsi una seconda volta a Siracusa, dove il giovane Dionisio è succeduto al padre e desidera ardentemente di essere educato alla filosofia, offrendo l'inaspettata opportunità di realizzare quella coincidenza fra filosofi e governanti che Platone aveva in mente. La lettera descrive puntualmente lo stato di confusione

all surprising in a young man", he had accepted the invitation of family members and acquaintances to enter public life, only to quickly realize that "these men made the former government appear golden". A few years later, at the fall of the Thirty, he was seized again "by the desire to act on common and political things". But this time too he had to withdraw in horror when "some powerful men dragged our friend Socrates to court ... condemned and killed him" (325 a-c). At this point, considering the corruption of laws and customs, Plato was seized by a sort of dizziness (*iliggia*, literally the vertigo that seizes us when we look from a great height) and, realizing that all cities were *badly governed*, he decided (but Plato says "I was forced, *enagkasthen*", 326 a) to abandon politics for philosophy, convinced that future generations would never free themselves from calamities until those who philosophize correctly and truly took public office, or until the powerful in the cities, by divine fate, had begun to philosophize.

It is only after these first two failures that the letter recalls the philosopher's three trips to Syracuse, where, for the first time, now forty, he meets Dion, "then still young", and shows him "what he believed to be the best for men", without realizing that in this way he was preparing him to overthrow tyranny.

It is on the second trip to Syracuse that Plato must fully measure the problematic of the 'nonetheless', of the unfortunate necessity to take seriously non-serious matters. Dion, who had achieved an important position in the city, begs him to go a second time to Syracuse, where the younger Dionysius succeeded his father and ardently desires to be educated in philosophy, offering the unexpected opportunity to realize the coincidence between philosophers and rulers that Plato had in mind. The letter accurately describes the state of confusion (*distazonti*, a real inner scission) into which the invitation throws the philosopher: in the end,

(*distazonti*, una vera e propria scissione interiore) in cui l'invito getta il filosofo: alla fine, "vergognandomi di fronte a me stesso di apparire come un uomo capace solo di parole e incapace di impegnarsi in alcuna opera", egli accetta di partire, "coprendosi il capo" (*katakalypsamenos*, probabile citazione del gesto di Ippolito che nella tragedia euripidea *Yppolitos kalyptomenos* si copre gli occhi col mantello per non vedere quel che non vorrebbe vedere).

Non è il caso di descrivere nei particolari il fallimento di questo e del successivo terzo tentativo di realizzare a Siracusa il sogno di Dione (e, in parte, dello stesso Platone) di un re-filosofo. Decisivo è che i viaggi in Sicilia rappresentano un altro fallimento, quello del filosofo di misurarsi nel modo giusto col suo "nondimeno". Platone, come Dione -e questo è il loro errore- hanno preso sul serio una cosa non seria, si sono occupati seriamente di una faccenda umana, dimenticando quella fratellanza fra il gioco e la serietà che immaginava nelle *Leggi* l'Ateniese, quando raccomandava di prendere sul serio le cose serie e non quello che non lo sono.

7. UN TEATRO DELLE MARIONETTE

È a questa luce che occorre leggere i tardi dialoghi di Platone, in particolare quelle *Leggi* che vengono considerate a torto o a ragione come il compendio ultimo del pensiero politico del filosofo.

Che proprio per questo dialogo occorra non dimenticare il monito del *Fedro* secondo cui il saggio può scrivere solo per gioco, è Platone stesso a ricordarcelo. Proprio al momento di iniziare l'esame delle legislazioni delle città greche, l'Ateniese dichiara senza riserve che "indagando le cose di ora e considerandole con attenzione, noi dobbiamo giocare con le leggi un savio gioco senile (*peri nomon paizontas paidian presbytiken sophrona*) e pro-

"ashamed in front of myself to appear as a man capable only of words and unable to commit to any work", he agrees to leave, "covering his head" (*katakalypsamenos*, probably quoting the gesture of Hippolytus, who in the Euripidean tragedy *Yppolitos kalyptomenos* covers his eyes with his cloak so as not to see what he would not want to see).

There is no need to describe in detail the failure of this and the subsequent third attempt to realize the dream of Dion (and, in part, of Plato himself) of a philosopher-king in Syracuse. The decisive fact is that the trips to Sicily represent another failure, that of the philosopher to measure himself in the right way with his 'nonetheless'. Plato, like Dion — and this is their mistake — took something not serious seriously, they took seriously a human affair, forgetting that brotherhood between play and seriousness that the Athenian imagined in the *Laws* when he recommended to take serious things seriously and not those which are not.

7. A PUPPET THEATER

It is in this light that it is necessary to read Plato's late dialogues, in particular the *Laws* that are considered, rightly or wrongly, as the ultimate compendium of the philosopher's political thought.

Plato himself reminds us it is precisely for this dialogue that it is necessary to recall *Phaedrus*' warning that the wise man can write only for fun. When beginning the examination of the laws of the Greek cities, the Athenian declares unreservedly that "by investigating the things of the moment and considering them carefully, we must play a wise game with the laws as would elders (*peri nomon paizontas paidian presbytiken sophrona*) and proceed on the path, without

cedere nel cammino senza molestie" (685 a).

Il fondamento filosofico di questo "gioco senile" era stato esposto qualche pagina prima, poco dopo l'inizio del dialogo, quando l'ateniese pone a modello delle leggi umane né più né meno che un teatro delle marionette. "Figuriamoci che ciascuno di noi esseri viventi sia una marionetta meravigliosa formato dagli dèi o per loro trastullo (*paignion*) o con qualche serietà (*spoudei tini*), poiché questo non lo sappiamo; quello che sappiamo, invece, è che queste nostre affezioni ci tirano come se in noi ci fossero corde o fili, che ci sospingono vicendevolmente a opposte azioni". La legge della città è paragonata a uno di questi fili, un filo d'oro, che ogni uomo dovrebbe seguire senza mai abbandonarlo e , con un scherzo davvero grandioso, la buona legislazione potrà solo risultare secondo l'Ateniese dal fatto che gli uomini si rendano conto del significato del teatro delle marionette in cui si trovano e la città, "istruita da un dio o da un cittadino che ne abbia conoscenza, comprenda il significato di questo discorso e ne faccia una legge" (644 d-645 a). Il passo citato sul "prendere sul serio ciò che è serio e non ciò che non lo è" e sui "giochi più belli" che gli uomini devono giocare acquista il suo senso solo se lo si riporta al modello burattinesco che è qui disegnato.

Solo se non si dimentica che l'opera è in qualche misura uno scherzo, si comprende perché essa abbia potuto apparire agli studiosi come un abbozzo non scevro di contraddizioni, dove "la disinvoltura propria dello stile platonico, per cui il periodo procede spesso attraverso sospensioni e riprese, in mezzo a incisi e anacoluti di ogni genere, è spinta fino all'inverosimile" (Pugliese Carratelli, p.1168.) Le "lacune di pensiero", le "questioni che si propongono e di cui non si fa più parola in seguito ", le "frasi a cui non si riesce a dare un significato conveniente…veri rompicapi, dinanzi ai quali non si trovano due commentatori, interpreti e traduttori che vadano d'accordo" non sono il segno di una man-

distraction" (685 a).

The philosophical foundation of this 'wise game' had been revealed a few pages earlier, shortly after the beginning of the dialogue, when the Athenian proposes as a model of human laws no more and no less than a puppet theater. "Though we do not know this, let us imagine that each of us living beings is a marvelous puppet formed by the gods, whether for amusement (*paignion*) or with some seriousness (*spoudei tini*); what we do know, however, is that our affections pull us as if there were strings or cords in us that pull against each other into opposing actions". The law of the city is compared to one of these strings, a golden string, that every man should follow without ever abandoning it. As with a really great joke, good legislation can only result, according to the Athenian, from the fact that men realize the meaning of the puppet theater in which they find themselves and the city, "instructed by a God or a citizen who knows this discourse, understands its meaning and makes a law of it" (644 d-645 a). The passage quoted on "taking seriously what is serious and not what is not" and on the "most beautiful games" that men have to play, acquires its meaning only if it is brought back to the puppet model that is drawn here.
Only if we do not forget that the work is to some extent a joke, do we understand why it could have appeared to scholars as a sketch not devoid of contradictions, where "the casualness of the Platonic style, in which the clause of a sentence often proceeds through suspensions and resumes in the midst of insertions and all kinds of grammatical inconsistencies, is pushed beyond belief"(Pugliese Carratelli, p.1168). The "gaps in thought", the "questions that arise and of which no more is said later", the "phrases to which it is not possible to give a suitable meaning... real puzzles, about which no two commentators, interpreters, and translators agree", are not the sign of a lack of revision by the author, but rather the

cata revisione da parte dell'autore, quanto piuttosto la cifra del carattere più proprio dell'opera, che è l'estremo gioco a cui Platone ha voluto affidare il suo pensiero.

Ancora una volta è l'autore stesso a ricordarlo. Nella terza lettera, Platone afferma di essersi occupato seriamente (*spoudasanta*) soprattutto dei proemi delle leggi. Che la lettera sia autentica o meno, essa si accorda perfettamente con quanto Platone scrive nelle *Leggi*, quando, giocando sul doppio significato, musicale e giuridico, del termine *nomos*, suggerisce che, come nei nomi citaredici, si danno preludi mirabilmente elaborati, così è necessario che anche nelle leggi della città vi siano proemi, perché l'elemento normativo da solo è adatto piuttosto a degli schiavi che a degli uomini liberi. Subito dopo, uno degli interlocutori paragona l'intero dialogo a un proemio e non a un discorso sulle leggi: "Riprendiamo dunque da capo -come dicono quelli che giocano (*paizontes*), la seconda prova è meglio della prima- per fare un proemio e non un discorso. Cominciamo riconoscendo di star facendo un proemio (723 e)".

Le *Leggi* non sono l'esposizione della filosofia politica di Platone. Non esiste una filosofia politica di Platone, perché, secondo la tesi -anch'essa evidentemente scherzosa- che afferma che le sventure delle città degli uomini cesseranno solo quando i filosofi diventeranno re, una politica non è per ora umanamente possibile: possibile è solo un lunghissimo, giocoso proemio . E se questo proemio contiene necessariamente una parte non irrilevante di scherzo, ciò non significa che esso sia inutile: forse, nella politica come in tutte le attività umane, solo i proemi possono servire a qualcosa, soprattutto se non sono da prendere troppo sul serio.

Questo non significa, come oggi incautamente si sostiene, che vi fossero delle questioni di cui il filosofo si occupava seriamente fra intimi nelle sue lezioni nell'Accademia. Nella settima lettera Pla-

hallmark of the most proper character of the work, which is the extreme game to which Plato wanted to entrust his thought.

Once again it is the author himself who remembers it. In the third letter, Plato claims to have dealt seriously (*spoudasanta*), above all, with the proems of the laws. Whether the letter is authentic or not, it accords perfectly with what Plato writes in the *Laws*. Playing on both the musical and juridical meanings of the term *nomos*, he suggests that just as admirably elaborate proems are given for the cited laws, so it is necessary that there be proems even in the laws of the city, because the law alone is more suitable for slaves than for free men. Immediately afterwards, one of the interlocutors compares the entire dialogue to a proem and not to a discourse on the laws: "So let's start all over again — as those who play (*paizontes*) say, the second performance is better than the first — to make a preface and not a speech. We begin by acknowledging that we are making a proem" (723 e).

The *Laws* are not the exposition of Plato's political philosophy. There is no political philosophy of Plato because, according to the thesis — which is also evidently playful — which states that the misfortunes of the city of men will cease only when philosophers become kings, a polity is not humanly possible for now: what is possible is only a very long, playful proem. And if this proem necessarily contains some element of a joke, this does not mean that it is useless: perhaps, in politics as in all human activities, only proems can be of any use, especially if they are not to be taken too seriously.

This does not mean, as it is recklessly claimed today, that there were questions that the philosopher was seriously concerned with only among intimates in his lectures at the Academy. In the seventh letter Plato excludes it, evoking the uselessness not only of writing, but also of a “disquisition in words” (*epicheiresin…*

tone lo esclude, evocando l'inutilità non solo della scrittura, ma anche di una "disquisizione in parole" (*epicheiresin...legomenen*). Serio è ciò che si mostra come non detto nella scrittura non seria dei dialoghi. In questo senso è possibile che "nondimeno" sia un termine tecnico essenziale della filosofia. Martin Puder, nel suo bel libro su Kant, ha richiamato l'attenzione sul fatto che uno dei termini preferiti da Kant, collocato ogni volta in una posizione strategica, è la congiunzione "nondimeno" (*gleichwohl* - a volte anche nella forma ancora più forte *dem ungeachtet* (nonostante ciò). Essa sta a indicare che una riflessione viene fatta senza riguardo a ciò che precede, che il pensiero si afferma per così dire ipotatticamente, senza connessione -o in aperta contraddizione- col contesto in cui sembra iscriversi. Mentre l'idealismo, scrive Puder, ha estrapolato dal "nondimeno" la sua dialettica, Kant si tiene fermo allo stallo e alla contraddizione del suo *gleichwohl*. La metafisica era diventata nel suo tempo una cosa non seria, era -o sembrava- in questo senso impossibile; nondimeno Kant si propone di indagare in quale forma diventi nuovamente possibile parlarne. Non deve stupire che questo tentativo approdi a un ente di ragione affatto privo di significato, che il noumeno sia in qualche misura uno scherzo sublime.

La filosofia sarebbe allora il tentativo di pensare qualcosa nella forma del "nondimeno", di occuparsi per quanto possibile seriamente -cioè in ultima analisi giocosamente- di questioni non serie. Come la politica, appunto, secondo Nietzsche e Platone.

legomenen). Seriousness is what shows itself as unspoken in the non-serious writing of the dialogues. In this sense it is possible that 'nonetheless' is an essential technical term of philosophy. Martin Puder, in his beautiful book on Kant, drew attention to the fact that one of Kant's favorite terms, placed each time in a strategic position, is the conjunction 'nonetheless' (*gleichwohl* — sometimes even in the even stronger form *dem ungeachtet* (regardless). This indicates that a reflection is made without regard to what precedes it, that thought is affirmed, so to speak, hypothetically, without connection to or in open contradiction with the context in which it seems to belong. While Idealism, writes Puder, has extrapolated its dialectic from 'nonetheless', Kant holds firm to the stalemate and the contradiction of his *gleichwohl*. Though metaphysics had become a not-serious-thing in his time (it was - or seemed - impossible in this sense), nonetheless Kant sets out to investigate the form in which it becomes possible to speak of metaphysics anew. It is not surprising that this attempt leads to an *ens rationis* that is totally meaningless —that the noumenon is, in some respect, a sublime joke.

Philosophy would then be an attempt to think something in the form of 'nonetheless', to concern itself as seriously as possible — that is, ultimately playfully — with non-serious issues. Just like politics, according to Nietzsche and Plato.

Thematic Articles

On the need for a Common Roof

Leopold Kohr, Initiator of Social Morphology*

By Ivan Illich

Dear, honored Leopold Kohr,

Here we are, about to have a Salzburg Festival in your honor. I am deeply moved and want to give you thanks at this festive opening for what you have given to many of us, and for having become our teacher. You have always been an unobtrusive teacher. You have always behaved as one who knew that whoever has ears to hear you would sooner or later of necessity stumble upon you. And so, many guests at this festivity have, like myself, stumbled one time or another, and taken away a memento. What was written in these mementoes, and what we have made of them, will be what we shall report here. But you have also always been a witty teacher. Though entirely a son of Oberndorf, in the Salzburg country town of 'Silent Night', your way of teaching was that of a Semite. Like a Rabbi or a Mullah, you avoided putting forward theories and told stories instead. All your life you have spoken and written like one who knows that arguments can end merely in conclusions and only stories make sense. When I read the Gospels, I only know that I have grasped the point when the parable makes me smile, and it is the same with your writings. Your stories form the thread which you have woven, with scientific thoughts, into the fabric of your teaching. In this manner, you have broken open the prosaic framework

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* Ivan Illich gave this text as an introductory address to the 'Symposium on the human scale' held in honor of Leopold Kohr April 28-30, 1982, in Salzburg. It was published as the "Foreword" to Kohr's *The Breakdown of Nations*, Routledge & Keagan Paul, London. 1986.

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of the science of latter-day. In this way, you wove together the two strands of what is scientifically measured and aesthetically assured, and made this weave the foundation of social morphology. You made us dare still to teach with parables, even in the late twentieth century, to make modern science play the role of commentary. And there is a third thing I want to thank you for: your courageous readiness to be surprised. In the discipline of which I think you are a founder, you have always been one or two decades ahead of us — John Seymour made this beautifully clear. But whenever one of us caught up with you with some elegant deduction, such as 'that small is beautiful' — or the thesis 'that acceleration paralyses society' — you were always, more than others, modest enough to be surprised by our seemingly brand-new discoveries, that had been so obvious to you for so long. We honor you for this exemplary humility. It alone made it possible for you to make modesty itself the central object of your researches. I speak, that is, of social modesty as your central research object. In this year of 1982, I purposely avoid the term 'self-limitation' because, during the last ten years, self-limitation has become the *theme-celebre* of science. 'Autopoiesis' of living or even social systems is the great new land of cybernetics, of theoretical biology, and of the generalized 'shortageologies' which go under the name economics. For quite a long time now, some scientists have taken seriously your insight of forty years standing that, whatever is wrong today, it is because it is too big. A compulsion to trivial smallness, scientifically underpinned and permeated by technology, threatens today to become the new ideology, and tries to appropriate your teachings. I call your research project social modesty in order to present this misappropriation. Modesty is not a utilitarian but an ethical-aesthetic motivation for action. The modesty of this Salzburg dreamland of yours is neither genetic — like the self-limitation of a mussel to five turns and not six — nor is it predetermined by a cybernetic program. It stems from the consciousness of a society that an ambit of say 22 km is best because such people as live in these mountains can fill it with life and enjoy it. It is simply impossible to reduce the feeling for ethical and aesthetical proportion to an objectively calculated span of variations. The common living space of Oberndorf corresponds with a human dimension given by you in your hymn to Salzburg as a radius of 22 km. It is a human environment. Its *reach* cannot be reduced to the *territory* of an animal, nor that of the *radius* of an automobile with shoes on. The measure of this environment is correct because it is capable of being built upon with taste, settled in style, conceived with brain and heart, and celebrated in a local dialect. Not only are field and meadow thus made beautiful, but also the town itself. Your style has the lively simplicity which makes it difficult for socio-biologists or cyberneticians to claim you.

The first thing I learned from you was the importance of quite a simple little word: 'gewiss'. You probably no longer remember the occasion. It was Everett Reimer, at that time my mentor, who introduced me to you. You asked me to your patio in Rio Piedras, and our conversation (with lemonade), drove us from statistical diagrams to the platonic meaning of the just measure. All three of us knew Plato's distinction between the 'ell', which one would use to measure out a size, and the 'logos' through which one comprehends a relationship. This is when you said that such relatedness (or proportions) can exist only, and be beautiful only to a 'certain' extent. Ever since, and more and more compactly, this little word 'certain' permeates my teaching, as it does yours too, and angers many of my colleagues.

Dictionaries do not disguise the ambiguity of this unassuming word. On the one hand, 'gewiss' means sure, firm, certain, indubitable, determined once and for all, 'this way and no other way'. Science seeks certainty in this sense — a test anyone can make afterwards. The second sense of 'gewiss' runs right across from the first. *Duden's Dictionary* gives it as 'not exactly expressible, difficult to establish or describe, not closely defined, or for decency reasons better left unsaid'. It is in this sense one speaks of a certain share, a certain people, of a certain self-evidence, without which no one can live. Certainty in the first sense comes from a clarified discrimination between 'correct' and 'false', the inquest to be carried on with new means. Certain in the second sense appeals to good taste — 'et de gustibus non est disputandum'.

You speak often indeed of a 'certain' magnitude of society: it is one which can be encompassed as a whole. It is not only you, honored *magister*, who calls this encompassability 'certain' — all wise people call it that. Encompassable is the meaning of the root from which the little word 'certain' stems. And so, social morphology is the quest for that 'certain' order of magnitude within which 'certain' social relationships are beautiful.

To be more precise: may I denote social morphology as research seeking out the subjective limits within which the use of objective-scientific yardsticks can result in sensible insights, proper decisions, and beautiful form? 'Si placet haec definitio', a research neither reducible to science nor without reference to science. For social morphology thus conceived represents a search for the applicability of scientific yardsticks, and thus quite essentially refers to forms of cognition which are objective and universally scientific. On the other hand, this definition lifts social morphology out of the whole array of natural and social sciences, since its job is precisely the tradition-bound, aesthetic, and often even perhaps religious, search for how far science is applicable to a community encompassed subjectively by an historic 'us', a concrete community. The morphology I learned from you is the exploration of the limits within which the subjective social senses for proportion and beauty makes it desirable for *us* to put up with, or even to make use of, scientific-technological procedures. And in order to be encompassable, a society has to be not only small but also beautiful. Ugliness revolts us, even if small. One refuses to consider it. Smallness and beauty are necessities of life. A small democracy is impossible if it is not beautiful. Forced smallness is always ugly, never encompassable, violates the feeling for life, and simply cries out for more and more police. For a society to 'content itself' with the best is only possible where ethical-ideological sharing of responsibility rests on aesthetic sharing, on a celebration of beauty. The Scholastics of the thirteenth century spoke of beauty as the splendor of goodness: you, Leopold Kohr, speak again and again of beauty as of that which is, *in a certain measure*, the best, because it can be encompassed with pleasure by people imbued by this beauty.

Up to this point, dear honored friend, I have spoken as a pupil to you. I have tried to profess *how* I understand *you*. From here onwards, I would like to report *to where* I am led now by the research into social modesty. Just as you have built upon Darcy Thompson and John Haldane, and made their biological morphology the starting point of a social morphology, so would I too like to answer the questions raised by your representation.

Ever since *Breakdown of Nations* was published, that is for 40 years, you have been working on the mutual conditioning of social measure and social form. I am driven by curiosity to discover the fundamental formal principle which enables a surviving traditional society, — nay, all of them — to restrain itself in modesty with regard to the order of magnitude of its spaces, rhythms, goals, and means. This is to say, that if I do not succeed in finding such an independent, characteristic principle of social morphology, the theory and practice of modesty will remain open to the danger of being interpreted either cybernetically, i.e. in the last resort mechanistic, or utilitarian, i.e. as economically optimized, or even voluntaristically, ultimately professionally, as architecture. Neither the binary code of atomic physics, nor the thermodynamics of theoretical biology, nor even the duality of spirit and matter in which architects wallow, can give me the *certain complementariness* which is the weft and warp of live social patterns.

For this reason, I begin my reflections with the study of the 'Kohr'. A Kohr — you will surely forgive my usurping of your family name in the service of social morphology — is not an area but a reach, not a size but a dimension and reflects that feeling of life you point to by your 22 km, that is the four walking or one-and-a-half cycling hours between Oberndorf and Salzburg. Thus I confront metric units diametrically, but also only 'to a certain extent', with the Kohr.

Schumacher has implicitly formulated the thesis that only a world made up of Kohrs can be beautiful. You gave richer content to the definition of beauty. You said that things humanly just are also *sybaritic*. You refer here to the cookery book of Athenaeus which explains that legendary opulence of the city of Sybaris by the fact that its coast, in contrast to those in Athens or Corinth, does not suit harbor installations or commerce and that therefore the Sybarities have to enjoy everything they produce themselves. And so, life in a humanly just reach is — characteristically — a joy. But all forms of experience which I, and people like myself, would call enjoyment, contain of necessity a duality. Not the sum of one plus one, but a certain duality, never expressible with exactitude, difficult to identity, not to be closely characterized, and for fateful reasons better wrapped in silence — this is at the root of our enjoyment of modesty, of social frugality. Consequently, the Kohr is not a term for a measure but for the reach of a quite certain duality. And what is the substance, in the final count, of this specifically social duality? I seek and find it that same as any other reasonable human surely would too: enjoyment.

You see, the question I put to myself is this: what is it that makes one Kohr distinguishable from another, and every Kohr homogeneous in itself? And I believe it is to be found in the principle expressible in the English word 'gender', in German 'genus'. Nowhere can one find a homogeneously formed ensemble of men and women to extend beyond a whole Kohr. A Kohr is the morphological term for a unique, vernacular correlation of the sexes. Men and women work out their system of who uses which implement in the most harmonious manner within the confines of one Kohr. In one particular Kohr, only men use the scythe and women the sickle, and the local patron saint will see to it that it should stay so. In the next Kohr, women too will take up the scythe, but only when making hay, and only in the second mowing. The reach of the Kohr is fixed by this quite certain and definite yet not quite comprehensible, asymmetrical complementarity between what is socially stamped as masculine and as feminine spheres. I owe it in part to my Salzburg studies, this understanding of the vernacular Kohr as the term for a self-restraint to a characteristic correlation of the sexes, a singular gender-formation. What helped me were the comments of my doctoral patron Auer to the epistle of Augustinus to Paulina, the seminar on the womb and the umbilical cord in the religious ethnography course of Professor Rudolf Kriss, and the many years with two colleagues from Salzburg times, Lenz and Ruth Kriss-Rettenbeck. But for the thorn of curiosity which goaded me to find in the duality of social gender a this worldly reflection of the *relatio subsistens* — for this, LAUS TIBI DOMINE.

Ivan Illich: A Philosophy of Limits

by Humberto Beck

The Illichian project as a whole—from its critique of the economy and technology to the outline of rehabilitation of the vernacular—assumes a vision of the modern world as the scene of a formidable drama between two antagonistic principles: the ideology of progress and the multidimensional balance of human life. Progress and its industrial mentality threaten every dimension of this equilibrium, every scale appropriate for coexistence: the destruction of the environment ruins harmony with nature, industrial monopolies undermine autonomy, educational over programming undermines knowledge and creativity, social polarization cancels equity and the possibility of politics, and technological acceleration invalidates recourse to tradition. Above all, modernization destroys that scale of social coexistence that Illich calls the "balance of action": the proportional relationship between means and ends, between human beings, their products, and their tools. From the postulation of these boundaries that favor social coexistence and from the identification of the risk that economic growth represents for each of them, Illich derives a systematic theory of modernity. The originality of this theory consists in integrating as its most characteristic element just that principle that has been perceived historically as the primary antagonist of modernity: the idea of *limits*.

"The equilibrium of life," writes Illich in *Tools for Conviviality*, "expands in various dimensions and, fragile and complex, does not transgress certain boundaries. Some

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thresholds must not be crossed."[1] So far, technological civilization has been founded on denying the need to recognize these boundaries "within which the human phenomenon remains viable."[2] The Illichian diagnosis is that the modern project of transgressing boundaries and transforming the human condition—the "industrialization of desire"—is predestined to failure: it provokes Nemesis, the force unleashed by the immoderate ambition of limitless progress. Nemesis adds yet another layer to human suffering, beyond exploitation and violence: a new kind of malaise that is the consequence of progress, a byproduct of institutions initially designed to protect humanity from the elements: "The greater the economic progress of any collectivity, the greater the part played by industrial Nemesis in pain, hindrance, discrimination, and death. The more intense the security that is placed in dependency-producing techniques, the greater the rate of waste, degradation, and pathogenesis that must be attacked even by other techniques, and the greater the active force employed in the disposal of garbage, the handling of waste, and the treatment of people whom progress has rendered superfluous."[3]

For Illich, the transgression of limits initiates a *negative dialectic of modernity,* whose name is Nemesis: the combined effect of the collateral results of modernization and all its successive corrective modernizations. The state of this negative dialectic is a calamity composed of the secondary effects and counter-effects of modernization, which only accrue because it does not occur to anyone that the way out of the chain of troubles could be not more but less modernity. In her work of the same name, Hannah Arendt includes in the notion of the *human condition* both “the situations under which life has been given to man on earth”—birth and mortality, worldliness, a plurality—and the circumstances created by human beings themselves. These circumstances are endowed with the same conditioning power as nature. From this perspective, Nemesis could be interpreted as the negative conditioning power of the human-made environment, and conviviality as the optimization of that power in favor of the freedom and autonomy of the human, its capacity to “constitute a beginning.”[4]

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[1] Ivan Illich, *La convivencialidad*, en *Obras reunidas I* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2006), 373.

[2] Ivan Illich, *Alternativas*, en *Obras reunidas I* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2006), 177.

[3] Ivan Illich, *Némesis médica*, en *Obras reunidas I* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2006), 752.

For Illich, the very notion of *culture* is identical to the set of socially accepted arrangements on the form and limits of human action, such as the rules for dealing with pain, illness, and death and the conditions for excluding certain activities from the sphere of scarcity and exchange. Human beings are the only animals capable of consciously adapting to their environment and, therefore, the only ones capable of designing the form of their relations with the environment and other human beings. This adaptation implies an acceptance of limits. The industrial order, however, precisely implies the destruction of cultural forms, that is, of all those traditions of a local organization that create and preserve a balance between a particular place, its population, and its tools. Modernity is, in essence, the act of demolishing these cultural forms through delocalization. In this process, modern institutions, such as the market economy and industrial production, extract social relations from their particular contexts to restructure them in an indefinite space-time.[5]

Industrial production and its radicalization by Nemesis put at risk those scales and balances that have constituted the basis for the historical forms of the human. The fundamental Illichian proposition behind the idea of limits is, then, the premise that human has a *form*. In Illich, the form of the human is not, as for Foucault, a "recent invention" of the human sciences, but the notion of certain correspondence between environmental and social aspects, a certain proportion in the links between the individual, the community, and nature. We call this certain balance of biological, historical, and cultural factors "human beings." Technological interventions are beneficial only to the extent that they enhance the flourishing of humans without breaking the limits of this balance that shapes it.

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[4] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 2-3.

[5] Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991).

In the contemporary world, the concept of the human is at stake. It may disappear, not so much "erased, like a face drawn on the sand at the seashore," but disintegrated by industrial modernity, which is based on the promise of the disappearance of all limits. In contrast, in traditional societies, there is a certain proportion between the "here" of human action and a non-manipulable "there." Although the modern world is born out of a critique of that "there," its substance does not disappear. Still, it is transposed into the secular infinities of endless desire or the indefinite plasticity of the human.

As his reflections on economics reveal, the main question behind Illich's work can be posed as follows: how to reconstitute, in the modern context, the arrangement of cultural forms? To answer this, Illich proposes the study of social morphology: the notion that there is a correspondence between the form and the size of social entities. The fundamental concept of social morphology is, as in the language of the good, proportionality—the question of what is proper to a particular situation. Proportionality is the inverse of hubris. It is the idea that things are inhabited by a propensity toward their good and that this "sensibility toward the proper" is the necessary condition of friendship and political life. From proportionality derives a perception of "the human condition as that ever unique and contour-creating boundary within which each community can argue about what should be permitted and what should be excluded" from life in common.[6]

In traditional societies, myth was the element that established the limits of that form and discouraged extreme ambition and the desire for transgression. But, in the new circumstances, the solution can no longer come from mythology. Whatever attempts there may be in that direction, a renewed awareness of limits cannot come from a restoration of the sacred but only from new politics. In modern societies, the question of the limits of human action can only be answered rationally by recognizing natural thresholds and determining social contours through democratic procedures. "Politically established limits to industrial growth," says Illich, "will have to take the place of mythological boundaries."[7]

In many ways, the Illichian proposal of limits represents a form of "immanent critique," that form of social contestation based on identifying the internal contradictions of a given society—the conflict between its discursive pretensions and its actual results—to imagine other possibilities that transcend the contradictions. In this sense, one can think of the Illichian critique of modernity as an enterprise analogous to the Frankfurt School project of critical theory, the main historical incarnation of the methods of immanent critique. In its various formulations—works such as Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno's *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944—1947), Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), and Jürgen Habermas' *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1981)—critical theory has set out to identify the relations between modernity and its "pathological" manifestations expressed in phenomena such as the degradation of culture or the reification of social relations. The authors of the Frankfurt School varied in their diagnoses: from the establishment of an irrevocable identity between instrumental reason and domination, that is, between modernity and its pathologies (Horkheimer and Adorno), to the proposal that these pathologies are potentially surmountable by further developments of modern logic itself, such as the replacement of instrumental reason by a form of "communicative" rationality (Habermas).

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[6] Ivan Illich, "The Wisdom of Leopold Kohr", in *La Perte des sens* (Paris: Fayard, 2004), 237.

[7] *Némesis médica*, 750.

There are evident parallels between the Frankfurt School project and the Illichian methodology of the critique of technology and the economy. Habermas, for example, identifies as the central objects of critical theory the state and capitalism as systems of rationalization that, by mutually reinforcing each other, subject social life to the logic of efficiency and control and end up collapsing the boundaries between the "system" and the "lifeworld"; he perceives in the political and cultural mobilizations of the 1960s attempts by citizens to resist this invasion of the lifeworld by the system and its "government of administrators."[8] Habermas' characterization could align with Illich's approach on more than one point. Thus, if we were to resort to the language of critical theory to characterize Illich's work, this work could be presented as an analysis of the pathologies of modernity from a critique of industrialism. The main pathology identified by Illich would be the mutation in the condition of instrumentality, which, taken to its ultimate consequences, would become an end in itself, thus subverting its original meaning and doing away with any possibility of authentic human autonomy.

It is possible to compare not only in conceptual but also in historical terms the critical enterprises of Illich and the Frankfurt School. On the one hand, critical theory was born in a context determined by the triumph of fascism, the eclipse of the workers' movement, and the rise of mass culture. On the other hand, Illich's critique of modernity was marked by the end of the years of post-war economic expansion, the genesis and spread of the development project in the Third World, the energy crises, and the emergence of new social movements critical of bureaucracy and capitalism around 1968. In a certain sense, a part of what the Frankfurt School carried out in the circumstances of the rise of totalitarianism in Europe in the 1930s and the consolidation of liberal capitalism in the 1950s was repeated—in its terms and with its categories—by Illich with respect to the international development project and the crises of industrial capitalism during the 1970s. Taking into account these affinities and differences, perhaps one should speak of Illich's work as a Cuernavaca School of critical studies of modernity integrated around Illich and the group of intellectual figures that gathered during the sixties and seventies at the Intercultural Center of Documentation (CIDOC) located in that Mexican city.

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[8] Jürgen Habermas, "Las tareas de una teoría crítica de la sociedad", in *Teoría de la acción comunicativa* (Madrid: Trotta, 2014), 904-944.

Although Illich's critique shares with the Frankfurt School the analysis of the development of modern rationality as a process of reification, the answers that both positions deduce from this analysis are radically opposed. The Illichian program represents an alternative to Horkheimer and Adorno's pessimism—modern rationality as a dead end—and to Habermas' optimism—modernity as rationality capable of internally resolving its pathologies. The proposal derived from Illich's critique consists of 1) a *convivial reconstruction of society*, which rethinks the meaning of modernity and progress by operating an inversion in the relations between means and ends, the subject and its instruments, and 2) a *revindication of the commons*, that is, the integration of the reality outside the economic sphere into the modern project of human autonomy.

Horkheimer points out that "reason will not be able to become transparent to itself as long as men continue to act as members of an organism that lacks reason."[9] By making explicit the tensions between autonomy and instrumentality in modernity, observing them in "the mirror of the past" and from the point of view of limits, Illich contributed to the task of "making reason transparent to itself", to the work of endowing with critical faculties that sometimes unreflective organism which is the modern world.

Despite the possible affinities and parallels with other currents of thought, what is certain is that Ivan Illich's work is inserted in its own tradition, a tradition in a certain sense new, because—as in the case of Kafka's "precursors" pointed out by Borges—the appearance of the body of Illichian ideas has been the very factor that has contributed decisively to configure it. This tradition is the *philosophy of limits*, a line of reflection that assumes attention to thresholds, boundaries, scales, and balances not as an anti-modern attempt but as an enterprise proper to the project of modernity. In this tradition, limits are not only the object of modern critique but also one of its dimensions.

The philosophy of limits is opposed to the great current that has prevailed, in symbolic and practical terms, in the ethos of modernity: the ethics of transgression. Faust, Bacon, and Nietzsche are the avatars of this modernity identified with attacks against limits and forms. A century ago, Oswald Spengler had already identified Western culture with "the Faustian" understood as that orientation towards the longing for an unattainable space, unlimited expansion, and the use of science and technology as instruments for the imposition of human will and the defeat of the physical barriers of the world. Francis Bacon, in turn, by interweaving the quest for knowledge with the power to subdue the environment, identified the collective consciousness of the modern era with the domination of nature from the 17th century onwards. Technology was the instrument of this dominion over resources to guarantee the material provision of human needs. Since then, as William Leiss points out, modern ideologies share the assumption that "the steady increase of human control over natural forces is the material foundation on which the superiority of modern civilization rests."[10] Nietzsche, for his part, articulated the critique of the limit as an invective against the Apollonian. This principle fixed the contours of self and culture through an illusion of form and added the celebration of the Dionysian as the space of the ungovernable flow of the real. For Nietzsche, "man is something that must be overcome"; he thus inaugurated speculation on the plasticity of the human that has been continued in various forms by writers such as André Breton and Antonin Artaud and thinkers such as Georges Bataille and Michel Foucault.

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[9] Max Horkheimer, "Traditional Theory and Critical Theory", in *Critical Theory: Selected Essays* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), 188-243.

In contrast to the ethics of transgression, the beginnings of the modern philosophy of limits are to be found in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. For Kant, "thinking" is synonymous with establishing the limits of thought and the conditions of the thinkable. But, beyond his epistemology, Kant institutes an impossible boundary between persons and things in his moral philosophy that forms the basis of an ethics of limits. While things are "beings without reason" that deserve a relative value as means, persons are "rational beings" that constitute ends in themselves. From this distinction, Kant derives the categorical imperative and his "formula of humanity": a fundamental ethical duty is never to use anyone's humanity as a means to an end. Since the autonomous will of subjects is the only source of morality, the whole edifice of ethics depends on fulfilling this duty—always treating people as ends and never as means. For Kant, the fundamental criterion of morality is establishing a line of demarcation between the spaces of autonomy and instrumentality. Kant calls the "realm of ends" this world of ethics,[11] in which each person recognizes all others as inalienable autonomous beings, and the status of mediality is reserved for objects.

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[10] William Leiss, *The Domination of Natur*e (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), xxi, 15-16, 145.

In the twentieth century, the emblematic formulation of the philosophy of limits corresponds to Albert Camus. In *The Rebel*, Camus establishes that all revolt has the moral unity of humanity as its foundation: the refusal to treat any human being as a thing. This foundation based on the unity of humankind imposes a delimitation on the world of history and power. Revolt for Camus, more than a transgression, is the affirmation of a limit, the boundary that marks the common dignity of the human. Every act of freedom, critique of power, or resistance against domination represents an exercise in the awareness of limits. Hence his maxim: "I rebel, therefore we are." Forged in the context of a meditation on the totalitarian drift of Soviet communism, Camus' criticisms can, however, be extrapolated to other incarnations of the ideology of progress as a will to absolute domination over reality. Revolt is a rebellion against the pretensions of those "purely historical universes" that deny the human condition and assume "the certainty of the infinite plasticity of man."[12]

History, for Camus, is not absolute—and Illich would add that neither are the economy, technology, or progress. Absolutes legitimize domination and violence: "Historical reason, whatever the order that founds it, reigns over a universe of things, not of men." The rebel does not claim total freedom like the revolutionary, but instead calls it into question. The rebel opposes "the unlimited power that authorizes a superior to violate the forbidden frontier"—that frontier constituted, precisely, by the dignity of other human beings. Rebellion also reveals a limit: the idea that there is a *measure* of the human.[13]

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[11] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 56.

[12] Albert Camus, *L'Homme revolté* (Paris: Gallimard, 1951), 311, 297.

In *If This Is a Man*, the memoirs of his time as an inmate in the labor and extermination camps of Nazi Germany, Primo Levi offers a testimony of the violation of this boundary at the hands of the powers of historical reason. In the camps, the prisoners lived in a state of absolute destitution. Existence in these conditions was a succession of episodes of imposed nudity aimed at reducing the body to a pure mass, depriving it of its capacity to be a sign of humanity. This violence was not only a degradation of the body but a disfigurement of the human. The historical experience of the camps represented the "experiment" of looking at the human world from the strangeness of an absolute extreme, the outer space of the non-human. From this radical perspective, it is discovered that, in a century populated by cults of rupture, rebellion consists of, as Camus argues, the preservation of the awareness that the human, despite being an open condition whose nature consists in the negation of nature, has a form.

The ethics of transgression has identified the infringement of limits as the human gesture par excellence. In this logic, one is human only to the extent that a boundary is transgressed because it is presumed that only in this way is the individual affirmed as an artifice opposed to the natural. But even the conventions of form represent a form of discontinuity with the environment: they also constitute, in their way, an elaboration of the human as artificial, different from nature. The real contest lies elsewhere: the contrast between *transgression* and *critique* as two different ways of assuming human self-foundation. Transgression is a celebration of the gesture of rupture—the ritual of tearing the veil as a ceremony of freedom. Critique entails a movement within a certain proportion: the project of building a world of subjects in an enduring environment.

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[13] *L'Homme revolté*, 364, 355, 367.

The technological imperative and industrial capitalism embody a mode of the ethics of transgression. But there is the possibility of another modernity that is less transgressive and more, properly speaking, *critical*— Kantian, Camusian, Illichian. The modernity of limits rejects any dominance; it encourages a form of self-scrutiny that, far from being a form of reclusion, opens itself to otherness because it is the foundation of civic life: the free and egalitarian encounter of oneself with others.

Illich's work constitutes, in this sense, a "critique of Faustian reason," a questioning of any project of boundless transformation of human beings and their environment, a rebuke to the sense of dissatisfaction inherent in the modern condition, and an objection to the secular infinities of the economy and progress, those parodies of eternity. It also represents an invitation to reinterpret, for the circumstances of the modern world, the concept of culture as the matrix of the multiple social arrangements appropriate for human flourishing based on the acceptance of certain defining contours.

To critique the technological phenomenon, which also encompasses the economy, it is necessary to situate oneself outside of it, in a zone of experience that technology cannot integrate. Illich found this point of reference in the moral and political principle of autonomy. Only something outside the technological system could serve as an orientation: a secular form of "transcendence"—that of the subject—as a source of freedom. Thus, Illich's analysis does not imply the suppression of technology but rather the program of giving it a new direction: conceiving technology as nothing more than a set of valuable artifacts, using it while preventing it from using us. His critique calls for creating a consciousness of autonomy capable of destroying the power of instruments over humanity.

In the present circumstances, developing a philosophy of limits would mean the opportunity to perform a fundamental operation—perhaps the most urgent—of contemporary society: reactivation of the political imagination. The application of this philosophy would bring with it neither a way out of modernity nor its overcoming but a reconsideration of its meaning from a perspective that is both radical—because it is relative to its origin, its root—and unprecedented—because it remains invisible to conventional political positions: the discovery of the *modernity of limits*. In a social world marked by the predominance of information and globalization, a politics of limits would be equivalent to imagining, along with other ways of distributing wealth, new forms of distributing knowledge and new modalities for the links between human beings, their tools, and their environment; it would also be tantamount to enunciating a powerful reminder that modernity is founded on its self-criticism.

As it is known, in his notes for the theses "On the Concept of History," Walter Benjamin points out that, despite Marx's statement on revolutions as the "locomotives of history," it is possible to think that revolutionary events represent rather an attempt to stop the advance of the locomotive.[14] Ivan Illich's work can be regarded, in the unbridled trajectory of modernity, as an urgent call to the train passengers—the human species—to activate the emergency brake.

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[14] Walter Benjamin, "Paralipomena to 'On the Concept of History'", in *Selected Writings*, volume 4, 1938-1940 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 402.

Against *pax oecologica*

by Neto Leão

Preamble

On December 1st of 1980, Illich gave the opening address of the first meeting of the *Asian Peace Research Association* in Yokohama. He entitled the speech *The De-linking of Peace and Development*, which later appeared in *In the Mirror of the Past* as that book's first essay (1992). Sustainable development and sustainability were not yet on the horizon. The sun of Development had not yet set when Illich spoke about it over forty years ago. Development, he said then, was the most recent mutation of the ongoing worldwide war against people's peace – this time in the name of developing them.[1]

Peace does not and did not only mean the opposite of war. Illich showed that peace is as vernacular as languages, as various and distinct as modes of abiding and being. It carries a range of historically and culturally shaped meanings and therefore finds little correspondence with one another. Peace was not a universal and abstract idea but a unique and specific spirit enjoyed by each historically constituted community. Though all are today usually translated as 'peace,' the Roman Pax, the Jewish Shalom, the Athenian philia, the Indian Shanti, the Japanese *foodo*, and the Chinese *Huo'ping* have incomparable meanings. Each people, each *ethnos* had its *ethos* of peace; each culture claimed its kind of peace; each community had its way of being left in peace. Illich named this *pax populi* [peoples'

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[1] Illich, Ivan. *In the Mirror of the Past*, (London: Marion Boyars, 1992), p.16.

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peace] that originates from every grassroots which defines and is related to a specific 'we'. Historically, what now goes under the name 'peace' was neither related to economics nor war. The contrast between these varieties of people's peace and what Illich named *pax oeconomica* could not be more significant.

Pax oeconomica refers to the idea that commerce and trade are peaceful alternatives to war. Today, we can see the close link between the two: commerce and war. Europe does less business with Russia because of a simmering war; the oil will flow easily again when the guns fall silent. The idea that economic competition is a less dangerous form of rivalry; that peace is the opposite of war and can be achieved through economic trade has been promoted under the banners of 'progress', 'development', and, more recently, of 'globalization'.

According to Illich, the aggressive spread of economic exchange replaces the variety of cultures with the homogeneity of the market. Today, the imposition of a global market, a worldwide regime of property, and the monopoly of manipulative technology and systems have become synonymous with peace, that is, *pax oeconomica*. *Pax oeconomica* is the planetary 'peace keeping' program that has served as a most efficient weapon of the war against the vernacular, the commons, and conviviality. Until now.

I argue that 'sustainable development' and 'sustainability' are now transmogrifying *pax oeconomica* into a *pax oecologica*. Both protect and expand economic exchange, but whereas the first protects the 'dirty' industries, the second protects the 'clean' industries; whereas the first aims at peace within society even at the cost of nature, the second promises peace among humans on the condition of stopping the human war on nature.

The Green New Deal proposed by the center-left in the USA is perhaps the best name to define this emerging *pax oecologica*. The *New Deal* of the 1930s was meant to save the capitalist economy without regard for the environment. The *Green New Deal* is intended to protect both the economy and the environment; it saves the environment by economizing it. The Green New Deal does not discourage transforming the commons into property as long as it expands markets; it does not challenge the unlimited expansion of markets as long as these are sustainable, and it does not question the unlimited growth of technologies like cars as long as they are electric. This is the credo of sustainability in the North and sustainable development in the South. It promises peace on earth because of a peace with the earth – through disembodiment, sustainability enlarges *pax oeconomica* into a *Pax oecologica*.

To hell with sustainability

Pax oecologica is a hoax because sustainability is the new scarcity. Sustainable development and the green economy are variations in an ongoing capitalist revolution. If the welfare state is a kidnapping of socialist values, then 'green capitalism' is a kidnapping of ecological values. Some think 'sustainable capitalism' is an oxymoron. I see no such contradiction due to a simple fact: the concept of 'sustainability' – whether in economics, ecology, anthropology, or sociology – does not require any limits to technology, limits to scarcity, or limits to property[2] (Silva Junior, 2013).

Sustainability and sustainable development are not grounded on limits to technology, property, or scarcity. And precisely because they are not so grounded, it is possible to see them as a case of old wine in new bottles. No limits to technology but the greening of tools. Not limits to property but recertifying them as organic and renewable. Not limits to scarcity but greening the economy. Sustainability is the new name for old ghosts that have haunted the planet for some time: progress, development, globalization.

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[2] Silva Junior, Roberto Donato da. *A sustentabilidade como híbrido: um olhar para artigos científicos em ecologia, economia, sociologia e antropologia*. 2013. 251 p. Tese (doutorado) - Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Instituto de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas, Campinas, SP. Disponível em: <http://www.repositorio.unicamp.br/handle/REPOSIP/280507>.

Without this triple limit, the ongoing environmental collapse is understood as an accident or negative externality of still immature capitalism. Sustainability sustains the myth that it can redirect economic growth away from environmental damage after some political adjustments and technical corrections. The reason to curse sustainability is so that we can debate real alternatives.

The road to climate change, and therefore to a literal hell on earth, has been 500 years in the making. The recent history of social-biogeochemical degradation cannot be understood without understanding the history of the expansion of market societies – from colonialism to globalization. Its new clean twin, sustainability, is now paving over the dirty road of development. Thirty years of sustainability or sustainable development have not lowered the planet's increasing temperature by one decimal. On the contrary, they are the main reason for its continued increase.

Following Illich's indictment of Development, I argue that sustainability perpetuates deepens a way of living anchored by market and state dependence and fueled by a sense of guilt. The rich can buy organic food wrapped in plastic, drive electric cars, and own Bayer's stocks. The poor, who cannot afford good food and who cannot walk on the roads for new electric cars, are blamed for not embracing conscious consumption. Bayer has a whole section of its business dedicated to sustainability. None of its actions promote the protection of traditional seeds, land reform, or limits soil exploitation. They have a zero-carbon policy based on carbon credits, which only monetizes climate change. They also expect to create a sustainable product by greening all parts of the chain supply. This is what they call sustainable agriculture. Sustainability means that Brazilian land usurpers can continue to burn the Amazon as long as their tractors are electric and solar panels light their offices.

It is beyond dispute that many others have seen the failure of sustainability and connected it to eco-development and eco-friendly growth. In Europe, for instance, the yet timid but topical Degrowth movement has been framing grounds for limits (D'Alisa et al., 2014). Silja Samerski has also shown a possible correspondence between degrowth and Illich's critique of technology and urged the degrowth movement to "seek deliberate limits to manipulative technologies in general" (Samerski, 2016). Ecosocialism reframed historical materialism by stating that "nonecological socialism is a dead-end" (Lowy, 2014; Leff, 2021). Boaventura de Sousa Santos has argued that sustainable development or sustainability are ways of perpetrating an epistemicide that has been the very cause of the social-ecological catastrophe we are facing and thus evokes epistemologies of the South (Santos, 2018). Luiz Marques has argued that sustainable capitalism is just an illusion and has shown three main aspects of its impossibility (Marques, 2020).[3]

It has become evident that the discourse on sustainability cannot but generate intellectual confusion, political diversion, and cultural stasis because the term has lost any determinate meaning. The seventeen sustainable development goals of the United Nations (UN – Department of Economic and Social

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[3] D'alisa, Giacomo; Demaria, Federico; Kallis, Giorgios. *Degrowth: A Vocabulary for a New Era*. (New York: Routledge, 2014). Samerski, Silja. Tools for degrowth? Ivan Illich's critique of technology revisited. *Journal Of Cleaner Production*, [s.l.], p.1-10, 2016. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2016.10.039. Leff, Enrique. *Political Ecology: Deconstructing Capital and Territorializing Life*. (Switzerland: Springer Nature, 2021). Löwy, Michael. *O que é o Ecossocialismo?* 2. ed. (São Paulo: Cortez Editora, 2014). SANTOS, Boaventura de Sousa. *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018). Marques, Luiz. *Capitalism and Environmental Collapse*. 3. ed. (Campinas, Switzerland: Editora Unicamp and Springer, 2020).

Affairs) cannot be accomplished based on the premises on which they are founded unless in a science fiction movie. In absolutely none of the descriptions of any goal and none of their political statements will one find a single mention of limits to property, limits to technology, and limits to scarcity that are scaled by the human body.

Take goals two (Zero Hunger) and six (Clean Water and Sanitation). The UN proposes rural development, food security, and nutrition through sustainable agriculture to rid the world of hunger. To guarantee clean water, the UN offers to ensure water availability and sustainable management. Goal eleven (Sustainable Cities and Communities) is framed by sustainable transport and strategies for safer, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable human settlements. Goal eight (Decent Work and Economic Growth) promotes sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work. More generally, as Luiz Marques has shown, for example, in the final text of the UN Conference Rio+20, *The Future We Want*, "the word sustainable is repeated 115 times, without being linked to a single concrete action to make it effective."[4]

Now, sustainable is the keyword here. It seems to function as a magical word as if agriculture and management could transmogrify into something else when the word sustainable precedes them. Instead, I follow Illich's argument and understand it as an amoeba word – what Uwe Poerksen calls a plastic word.[5] In a conversation with David Cayley, entitled *Life as Idol*, Ivan Illich defined amoeba-words as "a term with powerful connotations. A person becomes important when he uses it; he kind of bows to some kind of a profession[al] who know[s] more about it. He is convinced that he makes, in some way, a scientific statement. Using the word *makes waves*, but it doesn't hit anything."[6] Although a word such as sustainability does not designate anything precisely, it has many suggestive connotations.

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[4] Marques. Luiz., ibid, p.24

[5] See Ivan Illich's *ABC: The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1988), especially chapter seven, *From Taught Mother Tongue to Newspeak and Uniquack,* and Uwe Poerksen's *Plastic Words: the tyranny of a modular language* (State College: Penn State Press, 1995).

As Sajay Samuel argued, scientific terms should not be understood as concepts. Instead, they are constructs. The difference between commonsense concepts and scientific constructs is fundamental. Concepts are grounded in a sensible apprehension of the world, whereas constructs are mental fabrications untethered to the sensible world. For example, 'the earth' is a concept whose intelligible content can be grasped by the hand, whereas 'the planet' is a construct whose intelligibility can, at best, be visualized in models created by the mind.[7] As Einstein said of scientific constructs, they "are not however they may seem, uniquely determined by the external world."[8] The distinction between concepts and constructs allows one to see why scientific terms easily lend themselves to becoming plastic words. Sustainability is polyvalent and plastic precisely because, as a construct, it is not grounded in felt sensation or perception.

The price paid for scientific constructs can be high. To paraphrase Poerksen, plastic words "sound friendly, smooth, positive, and consensual, but they mask brutality while not in themselves evil. One can ruin an entire region with a word such as ‘sustainability.”[9] Stated simply, sustainability is unsustaining. I say: to hell with sustainability and hope to celebrate vernacular forms-of-living.

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[6] One can listen to their conversation here: https://www.davidcayley.com/podcasts/2015/4/19/life-as-idol. It is also available as a transcript here: https://www.davidcayley.com/transcripts.

[7] Samuel, Sajay. In *Defense of Vernacular Ways*, In Murton, James, et. al. (Eds.), *Subsistence under Capitalism: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*. (Toronto: McGill University, 2016).

[8] Einstein, Albert; Infeld, Leopold. *The Evolution of Physics: The Growth of Ideas from Early Concepts to Relativity and Quanta*. (Cambridge: Touchstone Books, 1967), p.31.

Vernacular forms-of-living

To shift the public debate on sustainability requires challenging myself to think after Ivan Illich, which means both thinking with him – grasping his arguments – and after him – extending his arguments. Accordingly, I collect Illich’s arguments on limits into a conceptual triad to define the space within which vernacular forms-of-living can flourish. Accordingly, I propose that *conviviality* corresponds to limits to technology, whether dominant tools and systems; *commons* correspond to limits to property, whether private or public, and *vernacular* corresponds to limits to scarcity, whether shadow work or paid work. In extending Illich’s argument, I suggest that the political struggle to realize limits to technology, property, and scarcity that are scaled by the human body will necessarily generate social arrangements which, following Agamben, I call vernacular forms-of-living – a life that cannot be separated from its form.

I propose vernacular forms-of-living as a conceptual tool – framed by an inseparable relation between theory and praxis – that can identify, recognize, analyze, and edify social arrangements that embody limits and therefore do not cross natural thresholds. There are several forms-of-living among original peoples grounded in the notions of limits that accord with natural thresholds. *Buen Vivir* or *Vivir Bien*, which Alberto Acosta translated to Spanish, defines ways of living of the Kíchwa, Aymara, and Guarani peoples, for instance, that are apparent alternatives to development.[10] Gustavo Esteva has drawn the clear lines for commoning in the new society, and among the Zapotecans and the Zapatistas has called for horizontal grassroots organizations grounded on commotion (to be moved together) instead of promotion (to move someone, as if one is stopped), in which living together means the practice of radical democracy.[11]

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[9] Pöerksen, Uwe, *ibid*, p.7

The vernacular is the fabric that spins forms-of-living. A call for vernacular forms-of- living is how I imagined an encounter between Ivan Illich – vernacular (*Shadow Work* and *Gender*) – and Giorgio Agamben – form-of-life (*The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life* and *The use of Bodies*). Both resuscitated these terms from Latin antiquity and ancient Roman law. Illich traced the vernacular back to the codification by Theodosius, while Agamben found reference to a form-of-life in Cicero, Seneca, and Quintilian, way before the Franciscans.[12]

Ivan Illich breathes new life into the word vernacular, knowing that its ancient meaning carries the seed for what he intends to define. Vernacular designated that everything is woven, cultivated, and made at home, unlike what was sought through the exchange[13] (Illich, 1981). Thus, vernacular, after Illich, names a range of activities born out of structures of mutual reciprocity, inscribed in each aspect of existence, that are non-market oriented. Vernacular activities can encompass the definition of use-value activities, such as cotton fishing net making or growing one's food, and reproduction activities, such as dating, exercising, or reading. The scope of the vernacular encompasses styles of thought in which science is not defined *for* people but rather *by* people, when knowledge is not a scarce resource but a shared commitment to support one another in beautifying the surroundings of communal life.

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[10] Acosta, Alberto. *O Bem Viver: uma Oportunidade para Imaginar Outros Mundos*. (São Paulo: Autonomia Literária, Elefante, 2016).

[11] Esteva, Gustavo. Commoning in the New Society. *Community Development Journal*, vol. 49, Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. i144–59, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26166215.

[12] Illich, Ivan. *Gender*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), p.68. Agamben, Giorgio. *The Omnibus Homo Sacer*. (California: Stanford University Press, 2017) p.963.

[13] Illich, Ivan., *The War against Subsistence*, in *Shadow Work*, (London: Marion Boyars, 1981).

Giorgio Agamben thoroughly analyzed the monastic rules within the Christian tradition to flesh out a life that is not separated from its form. By freely and willingly committing themselves to the coenobium (where one lives in common), the Christian monk adheres to a *regula vitae* (rule of life), which is not applied to their life. Instead, he produces their way of living since it is produced in it. The faith in Christ, the person, the word made flesh, generated a rule that conforms to His way of living. Even though Tertullian's *regula fidei* (rule of faith) later fed the lines written in the Nicene Creed, the rule was not meant to be a dogma but expresses the effort to follow the nude Christ (Agamben, 2014, p.75). Saint Francis of Assisi insisted that a rule of life is less a prescription of something than the act of following someone. Thus, a form-of-life is not the enforcement of a prescribed norm on life but rather living a life that, while being lived, takes the form that it ultimately seeks – what Agamben names the coincidence of life and form. Saint Clare's 'last will' incarnates the definition of a form-of-life: "I ... wish to follow the life and poverty of our most high Lord Jesus Christ" (Agamben, 2017, p. 967).[14]

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[14] Agamben's argument is that the rule is grounded in the act of following the form-of-living of someone. See Agamben, Giorgio. *Altíssima Pobreza: Regras Monásticas e Forma de Vida*. (São Paulo: Boitempo Editorial, 2014). He also refers to the origin of the rule as a sort of *regula fidei* (rule of faith), in which the monk, living by faith, embodies the wisdom of listening/reading the holy Scriptures (Agamben, 2014, p. 76). The correspondence between the rule and the Scriptures, from where the monks welled out the waters which nourished their quest for truth, is unequivocally expressed in the words directed to those who claim to follow Christ, which appear in the first Epistle

Therefore, thinking after Illich and Agamben, I propose vernacular as the name for the forms-of-living that presuppose limits to property, limits to technology, and limits to scarcity, scaled by the human body. Such limitations are not a set of prescriptions that must be imputed into living as an enforced norm. On the contrary, these limits mark out the zone of abundance that emerges from styles of living that cannot be separated from the forms they take. I call *regula vernaculum* (rule of vernacular) those forms-of-living that enact limits to tools, property, and scarcity scaled by the human body. Thus, limits can foster vernacular forms-of-living, if, and only if, they are lived and set while experienced, not imposed, not prescribed. To live within limits attuned to bodily thresholds embodies vernacular forms-of-living. A call for vernacular forms-of-living is an invitation to celebrate the abundance that can only be found within such limits. More precisely, a call for vernacular forms-of-living is an invitation to opening a social imaginary of thought and fostering peoples' ingenuity to invent ways of living within limits to scarcity (vernacular), technology (conviviality), and property (commons).

Conclusions and provocations

Pax oecologica is the latest front of the war against the vernacular. I borrow the words of Illich to say it with more precision; it is the planetary mission that spreads the "technological imperative transformed into normative responsibility."[15] Driving an electric car will soon become an act of universal responsibility. *Pax oecologica* is the main threat against vernacular forms-of-living. It is grounded on

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of Saint John: "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

[15] Cayley, David. *Ivan Illich in Conversation*. (Toronto: House of Anansi, 1992), p.287

the assumption that sustainable capitalism is the locomotive speeding us towards social-natural peace. Therefore, it runs over limits to scarcity, technology, and property because it treats these as archaic notions that deter the progress of humanity. Vernacular forms-of-living, like in Walter Benjamin's analysis of revolutions, are the emergency break of this locomotive. They cultivate their unique and colorful meanings of peace that keeps the playful balance between society and nature. Contrary to these modes of violence, *pax populi* protects vernacular forms-of-living.

As Illich once called for de-linking peace and development, I call today for the complete disassociation of peace and sustainability. The abundance of species – seeds, insects, trees, plants, mammals, stones and minerals, gases, waters, and peoples – spread across the various territories will never be 'left in peace' under the crusade of sustainable development or *pax oecologica*. There is no hope, rather total collapse with the invention of a new kind of *homo oeconomicus*, that is, its transmogrification into the *homo oecologicus*. Both are embedded in scarcity, and universal men are made "to live on the consumption of commodities produced elsewhere by others."[16] Both proclaim the insane mechanism of universal ownership. Both play with planet earth as if it was a ball that they could juggle around.

The *regula vernaculum* names the forms-of-living that emerge when people set limits to scarcity (vernacular), property (commons), and tools (conviviality) – each scaled by the human body. The manner of living keeps the spirit of people's peace alive. It constitutes the most radical challenge to *pax oecologica* because it reflects the various arrangements of modern yet proportional societies, each of which protects people's peace. *Regula vernaculum* is the sword against *pax oecologica*.

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[16] Ibid., p.23

Unthink the Zero!

by Christophe Kotanyi

Introduction

As we know, our loss of limits is closely related to capitalism. This is but one aspect of the question of the limits of modernity, of modernity which precisely proposes to set us free from our limits. I propose to cast a radical glance onto the question, in the sense of going to the roots, and I claim that they reach down to the foundations of mathematics, which is, of course, a difficult subject. But I suggest that we cannot spare ourselves that effort. In what follows, I attempt to articulate the question of the zero, which has conquered enough of our everyday life, of what Ivan Illich called the vernacular, to be familiar to everyone. The issue, in short, is that we have become accustomed to thinking of zero as a number, which it is not. Can we un-learn thinking of it as a number, or should we eliminate it? The present state of affairs seems to suggest the latter as the only way out.

The question of the zero involves a mathematical theory called transfinite set theory, which laid the abstract foundations of mathematics today. We will only allude to it here since going into it would be arduous. As the Greek geometer Euclid said twenty-three centuries ago, there is no royal road to mathematics, meaning no easy access. But we could use it as an example of how to address our question of the limits of modernity.

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1 A Non-Number

If it is true that capitalism operates by quantifying everything, first of all, time,[1] then getting rid of capitalism would require, in the first place, getting rid of the zero. Because without the zero, we can still count, but we cannot easily quantify or manipulate quantities with excessive ease. So, the question would be: how can we un-think the zero?

Now unthinking does not mean just deconstructing, forgetting, or forbidding. Because what you deconstruct, you can reconstruct, what you forget, you can remember, and thinking cannot be forbidden. Unthinking a concept would be more like when you are trying to find a certain address in the city, an address which turns out not to exist, making the search pointless. So, it is more proof of pointlessness than just proof of falsity or non-existence. It is more like undoing a wrong thought, taking it back by thinking it backward, the way you would undo a badly knit sweater, unbutton an ill-buttoned shirt, or back your car out of a dead-end, like getting rid, freeing yourself of a bad idea, dismissing it. And the zero, as we will argue below, has turned out to be, in many respects, a very bad idea, a hypnotic device worse than any addictive we know of.

We may remember here that the Romans did not use the zero. So how did they quantify? Because quantify they did. The army had units of a hundred soldiers each, the *centuria*. But that unit formed a well-defined pattern, so counting the soldiers was unnecessary, only to verify that the pattern had no gaps and excesses. This was not so much a quantification as what we might call pattern recognition, with a current though not entirely appropriate technical term. It is not so much a logical operation as an aesthetic one. And indeed, remember: the word cosmetic originates from cosmos, originally a military term denoting the well-ordered army.[2]

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[1] Frank Engster, *Money as a Measure of Time*, Radical Philosophy Conference, Berlin 2015.

That would mean a concept of number which does not operate with the distinction between ordinality and cardinality introduced by Georg Cantor, indeed the very framework upon which he constructed his transfinite set theory, but of number as a pattern. Every number can be represented as a pattern. Only the zero cannot be represented as a pattern.

This may remind us of the ethnomathematician Claudia Zaslavsky, who showed in her book *Africa Counts* (1973) how African mathematics uses counting patterns rather than numbers. And I still remember my wonder as a child when being told that some so-called primitive cultures know only three words for numbers: *one, two, many*. Why? We may answer with a shrug: they are too primitive to count further. The reason I was told was different: they are convinced that anything you count will vanish into nothing.

This brings us back to Cantor, whose greatest achievement was to think up to its ultimate consequences, with exemplary rigor, the concept of cardinality, i.e., quantification relying on the distinction between ordinality and cardinality (number as a place in succession, as a placeholder, versus number as a quantity), and to show that it leads to an unsolvable contradiction. Here we have the one-to-many effect: numbers conceived of as either ordinals or cardinals turn out to be without existence, without being, to be mere operational tools, forms without shape, logistical tools violating elementary logic.

Unthinking the zero would mean recovering the concept of a number as a pattern. The introduction of the zero has a history well documented by Jacob Klein in his *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra* (1968). It coincides indeed with the rise of capitalism in the 17th century. Now reversing that process would, of course, have a price: the loss of European hegemony over the globe. But for those convinced that that hegemony has gone far enough, indeed too far, that price might be worth paying.

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[2] Or the speaking order at the *symposion*.

2 Thinking the Zero

To be more accurate, the story begins in the late 12th century, when young Leonardo, the son of the Italian businessman Bonaccio, sails to North Africa to learn the secret of the Arabs' art of computing. The secret lies in the zero, called *shfr* in Arabic, derived from Sanskrit *shunya*, the void. *Shfr* gave Italian *zefiro*, hence our *zero*, and *cipher* (Georges Ifrah, *Histoire universelle des chiffres*, 1981). *Liber abbaci*, the book Leonardo "Fibonacci" (Bonaccio's son) published 1202, after his return to Pisa, will show with spectacular examples how the use of the zero enables one to write and to manipulate numbers as large as one may wish. We may easily imagine the enthusiasm the book raised among the businessmen of the time.

But *shunya* also denotes a key concept in Indian philosophy, similar to Parmenides' concept of pure being as the pure void, since free of all predicates; or Meister Eckehart's famous formula for divinity as sheer nothing, meaning un-graspable for any instrumental purpose. The instrumentalization of this void in the shape of the zero will lead to the instrumentalization of infinity, a key concept in Christian theology.[3] This story, in turn, might be traced to Nicholas of Cusa's *Learned Ignorance* (1440), where he introduces infinity as a mathematical metaphor for absolute being: the infinite circle whose center is everywhere and whose periphery is nowhere.

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[3] Even though a positional numeral system without the zero, also leading to infinity, is just as easy to conceive, see below.

Secularization might then be another instance of the effect we might call, with Lewis Carroll, the *boojum* effect: counting and conceptualization as repression of being under its functionality.

3 Productive Womb

Cantor's conceptualization of infinity as transfinity — infinity beyond infinity — begins, in a sense, with the ordinalization of the cardinals. By adding the zero at the beginning of the series of cardinal numbers, he replaces one as the first cardinal. As Klein reports, this procedure was introduced by the English mathematician John Wallis in the 17th century.[4] But whereas the zero can still be thought of as the result of an operation with numbers, as what remains after removing a positive, well-defined quantity, say the three apples from my basket, namely nothing; as a *number*, it defies common sense. Nothing is not a number, and the month has no day zero. As a number, as the quantity zero, or as the first member of succession, we might see it as an ill-formed formal functionalization of the concept of creation out of nothing, again a key concept in late Christian (nominalist) theology. Again, we recognize here a favorite topic in the discourse of capitalism, the creation of wealth out of nothing and the associated practices cheerfully transgressing the limits of common sense.

Thinking the zero, thus, one of the most fateful and fatal achievements of European civilization turns out to stretch over at least five hundred years. We may only hope that its unthinking takes less time as one step toward what Ivan Illich called the urgent task of *deschooling society*.

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[4] After the Flemish mathematician Simon Stevin had turned the one into a number, into the first cardinal, into a quantity (16th century).

4 Absurd Multiplicity

The recovery could begin with understanding how the introduction of zero turns the idea of multiplicity into an absurdity. The zero, as it were, contaminates numbers with its unreality, with its nothingness. This begins with etymology: *shfr* is the source for zero and also for cipher, for digit, and also for a secret code. Unthinking the zero would then begin with realizing that thinking the zero means unthinking the numbers. Shortly before the birth of set theory, Richard Dedekind asks: what are numbers? and answers: mere gaps in rationality. We might say with Ivan Illich: the decontamination should begin with revealing how the contamination occurred in the first place.

For set theory, multiplicity is a "heap", a container indifferent to its contents. Whether the set contains apples or bombs is indifferent, the main thing is its structure, which determines how it functions. What we call a number in this sense was still an absurdity for the Renaissance: ab-surdus, deaf and un-speakable. Indeed, most numbers in this sense cannot be spoken nor heard and not even computed. Zero comma three, three three, and so on would still be okay, but it is impossible to spell out the square root of two as a number, only as an algebraic operation. And most of them cannot even be said as such. Consider the so-called “real” numbers. We know that they are and that they must be somewhere, but we do not know what they are, where they are, or how big they are. Because most of them cannot even be grasped by a mathematical formula, they cannot be computed by any means. This is their utter paradox: numbers in this sense are pure “bigness”, pure cardinality, and most of them lack precisely this “bigness”, cardinality.

And here, we may remember that people usually count in their first language, called their mother tongue. Again, Illich notes that the mother tongue denotes an artificial language, as opposed to the vernacular.[5] We may thus surmise the configurational number (the number as a pattern, as a configuration instead of just a quantity) to be associated with the vernacular, and recapturing it would call for recapturing the vernacular. More than a conceptual task, this would be a political one. The zero would be proper to the circuits of power and the configurational number to life. The zero would secure the circulation of power and, to speak with Marx, produce an economy as a political power.

5 A Secret Weapon

This brings us to zero as a secret weapon of capitalism. The instrument of secrecy is concealed as openness. Of subtracting oneself from attack by obscuration. The zero would then be the device of hidden warfare. Of occult transparency. Of production usurping the role of generation, of productivity, of fertility. To summarize: unthinking the zero would require revealing its political dimension, unmasking it, of tarnishing its conceptual mask. As Marx would say: of exposing its metaphysical disguise.

Interestingly, *zefiro* stood first for the void uncovering meaning, giving sense to a hidden message: the holes in a screen superimposed on a coded text, showing the meaningful characters. This shift is most telling. Unthinking could then be more like an un-shifting, a mere shifting back. This shift is intimately linked to the shift from loud to silent reading made possible by the blank spaces between words, as documented by Ivan Illich. In a sense, the introduction of the zero secures that shift and extends it, giving it a new dimension.

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[5] *In the Vineyard of the Text*, 1997.

6 The Vernacular

The vernacular dislikes algorithmic thinking. Proper things have a proper name, including numbers. *Zero Zero Seven* is a covert agent, and the zero stands for improper things. This is, so to speak, the moral aspect. As the French still remember, the number is close to the name. Twenty is a number, a name, but two hundred is an operation with numbers, with names, two times a hundred, a manipulation always subject to doubt. The zero turns numbers into operations, names into algorithms, and language into an arbitrary logistic. Numbers are neither true nor wrong, but operations can be. Words are true, but their combination can be a lie. The vernacular does not combine words or numbers; it tells them in a narrative, "hundred and hundred". And the narrative cannot be true or false; it is good or bad, like a tune or a memory.

Unthinking the zero would not mean eliminating it but revealing how it came to be, to lift the curtain on its backstages. Ivan Illich's recovery of the vernacular, of the moral sense of the Romans, might turn out to have been one of the first steps to explaining the Romans' mistrust of the zero. This mistrust seems to have been widespread in Antiquity. Modernity might just be a forgetting, deliberate or not, of the original mistrust of the zero.

7 A Disease

Once released, the zero contaminates everything with its unreality. Language turns empty, the world becomes a void, and modernity becomes a sick man ignoring his disease. If it is true that this virus was released in India in the 5th century as a political device to finish once and for all with Antiquity represented by an outdated Roman Empire, then it spread as gunpowder did through Europe after it was introduced there by the Muslims. And the zero grew like urbanization did, as did the production of non-spaces in the middle of rural spaces, which were declared wasteland.

An apt therapist might diagnose amnesia as the result of the repeated traumatic shocks of history and prescribe the study of history as anamnesis for the cure. This would be the medical aspect. From the debacle of the Crusades to the mutation of Christianity into a robbers' association or, at best, into a limited liability company, one shock after the other, with all the symptoms of a wounded narcissism, that of warring nations domesticated and humiliated by culture, a culture operating with the virus zero. (I am alluding here to Nietzsche's accusation against the Roman Church, in *Twilight of the Idols*, that they have pacified the Barbarians who were invading the Roman Empire by contaminating them with the virus of nihilism, with resentment: "making the beast weak by making it sick"). Again, this exemplifies Illich's *corruptio optimi quae pessima*, the corruption of the best into the worst.

The full story would then tell how this cleaning agent of history backfires and favors the proliferation of a virus called "humanity", destroying all in its passage.

Unthinking the zero would also mean thinking to the end of Schumpeter's "creative destruction" and Béla Hamvas' "everything is in a crisis, except capitalism, because capitalism lives on the crisis" (Budapest 1945): capitalism as a *potlatch* and as an eschatological factor, driven by an empty signifier disguised as a number, as a shadow of emptiness (a second-order nothing), turning economy and politics into opportunistic diseases of a world at the brink of eternal crisis.

8 Gender

Suppose we accept Lacan's symbolism of the 0 and the 1 as associated with the feminine and the masculine principles, respectively. In that case, we might ask what their instrumentalization as numbers does to these principles. For Illich, "sex" comes from Latin *secare*, to cut, and the modern content of "sex" would indicate a split from a fictive neutral state, while "gender" denotes complementarity. Here we have a succession, the 1 being after the 0 in the sequence of numbers, and a quantification, the 1 being "bigger" than the 0, negating both symbolism and complementarity, and a homogenization again in the sense of neutrality.

Hence, we might consider tracing the elimination of "gender" in favor of "sex" also to the introduction of the zero, recalling the Marxist thesis according to which the homogenization of the "sexes" would serve primarily the purpose of producing a surplus of the workforce at the mercy of capital, as a strategy to neutralize what Marx called the "tendential fall of the profit rate" proper to capitalistic dynamics.

But this would call for further analysis, first of all of the dramatic "over-productivity" of this substitution of "sex" for "gender": of society as a multiplicity as amorphous as the mathematical set, instead of community relying on a "template"; of a science of nature and society relying on the standards of measurement meter-kilogram-second and money;[6] all of these, in turn, drawing on the unreality of the zero and contaminating all measurement and quantification with this unreality.

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[6] Frank Engster and Andreas Schröder, *Mass und Messung*, ZKSP 2014 1 (1), 109-147.

9 From Using to Thinking the Zero

According to Paul Saenger,[7] the introduction of Arabic digits, hence the zero, in Europe was related to word separation around the 10th century, again related to the translation of Greek texts from Arabic. Thus, the zero served here, just like word separations, merely as a graphic aid to reading. However, the resulting transformation of the concept of "word" seems to have brought along also a transformation of the concept of number and a shift from just using to thinking the zero. This might be seen as part of nominalist thinking since the Middle Ages, eventually leading to modern science and positivism.

In this picture, word separation generates words as visual patterns more than sounds. The positional system also seems to have aimed first at a representation of number as a pattern that is easy to grasp visually, hence easy to manipulate (Gerbert, later Pope Sylvester II, 10th century, quoted by Saenger). Yet just like words made of alphabetical characters, numbers made of digits differ from graphic patterns. They are rather encoded images, much more like our digital images; indeed, we might say, their very precursors. These numbers, like these words, are thus, in a sense, more like cryptograms than patterns.

Words as visual patterns composed as a succession of fixed elements drawn from a rather limited supply do not seem to have the same degree of "reality" as a graphic pattern, hence the notion that words are "just" this pattern – and so are the concepts they denote.

In other words, "thinking the zero" seems part of our history of "thinking language" in a close interplay. "Unthinking the zero" will then require rethinking our whole concept of language (and indeed our “thinking language” altogether instead of speaking it), more than just our mathematics.

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[7] *Space Between Words - The Origins of Silent Reading*, 1997.

Indeed, if one considers the introduction of the zero as a by-product of a transfer of cultures (from India to Europe via the Arabs) and the resulting theological debates, then the instruments proper to capitalism — stocks and their derivatives — will turn out to be of the same kind of unreality, or rather to claiming reality by turning autonomous, just like the new concepts of number and word are now seen as purely “formal patterns” made of arbitrary signs.

10 Number

The number as a pure multiplicity does not exist. It is an empty space, a void, a dummy, a substitute, an extension of the zero, generalized zero, zero in free-fall, its inertial, force-free movement, its *perpetuum mobile* violating the laws of being.

The configurational number is a comparison, an analogy: we here are like the fingers of this hand – in a precise mutual relationship. The accurate number is an accurate analogy: it says the richness of multiplicity. The configurational number says an excess of structure rather than its deficit.

The fictive number follows the law of addition, the configurational number of division: we belong together like the fingers of this hand, which does not obtain as their sum, but as their differentiation.

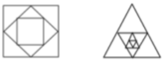
A number is also a name, a call, an invocation, a second-order call, of language calling language—of being calling being; instead of a void, the void of multiplicity at the shores of language also as a void. Unthinking the zero will then require thinking this call, number as language talking to language, a calling and answering, a structuring of language in an analogical network, in proportionality – number everywhere, not just as a multiplicity, but also as a network of relationships similar to language.

11 Articulation

Once three is not quite the same as three times one. The former says a truth, the three is the one three, a “structural tautology” (Lajos Szabó, 1947). The latter, taken at face value, is a lie. The one is unique, and so is the three. Three is the one three, once three, a basic truth, the tautology of being saying the “structure” of itself.

When we say three times the one, we obviously cannot mean three times the same one, because the one is unique. One is one; this is the tautology of being. Before three times the one was two times the one. If the “first” one here is taken as something like the true one, the one true one, then the “second” one cannot be but some kind of copy, a substitute one. And with three times one, the third one can be either the copy of the first, a “first-order copy”, or of the second. Three times one can thus be this or that, a first-degree three or a second-degree three.

The number as a pure quantity is thus a lie, and the number as a pattern is an articulated truth. Twelve is three times four or four times three, and the difference is obvious at a glance:



The fours (the squares) here are not identical, nor are the threes, but are so only if we disregard their differences. The number as a pure quantity is pure fiction.

What does the commutation rule of multiplication, which says that "once three is equal to three times one", make abstraction of? Precisely of the inner structure of the numbers, of their articulation. Truth is articulated. "Articulated truth" is a pleonasm, or the tautology of truth.

Language is articulated (language is truth, or the articulation of truth, its "articulated-ness": speaking the truth is "articulating" it), therefore, the number as a pure quantity is alien to it. The zero is the very principle of non-articulation. Unlike the one which is infinitely articulated, the point which points in every direction, each number which is finitely articulated, the zero has no articulation. This alienation from truth explains the "magnificent isolation" of mathematics working with the zero and also its alienation from the "vernacular", from the spoken words.

The one is "not like the other numbers", but, in a sense, precisely opposed to the zero. The one says Unity, the whole, everything, and the whole is infinitely articulated, it is "more than the sum of its parts" (Aristotle), this "more" being precisely its articulation. The "sum" would be "one plus one plus one...". The number as a pattern is "more" than just a quantity or a placeholder (a cardinal or an ordinal), precisely in this sense of articulation. Without its articulation, it is a lie, its articulation makes it true. Four is not just twice two. A car behaves very differently from a bicycle. Ignoring this distinction assimilates the bicycle and the pedestrian to the car and produces a traffic system closer to a permanent state of war than an urban way of life.

To summarize: at the logical level of language, words and numbers are networks within networks. At the logistical level, that of instrumentality, they are isolated quantities. The transition occurs through the zero, which turns Continuity, the One, Being into an instrument, the principle of separation.

12 The Zero and the Infinite

The zero thus usurps the place of the one as the counterpart of the infinite. The one is infinitely articulated, and the infinite is the articulation of the one. The zero disposes of the infinite as the principle of articulation by reducing it to the petty infinite. The "petty infinite", Hegel's "schlechte Unendlichkeit", which we should perhaps read, if we trust Nietzsche, as "schlichte Unendlichkeit" (meaning petty, mean), is that whole which claims to be the sum of its parts. True infinity, as the principle of articulation, is a meta-articulation, a superior articulation. From there to the conundrum of Cantor's undecidable "continuum hypothesis", to the riddle of the transfinites, to infinity which "can and cannot" be supplied with an order, is but a small step. True infinity is "one step" beyond language and says the *ineffabilis*, the unspeakable.

The petty infinite is a surrogate, a "simulated" infinite, the endless reflection of the inarticulate one, of nothing, of the zero, thus nothing itself, ultimately equivalent to the zero ("of measure zero", as the mathematicians say). The zero turns the true infinite into the petty infinite, truth into a lie – not even a lie, the mere shadow of a lie. As such, it is nothing less than the seed of evil. Would that not be reason enough to mistrust it? To use it with the utmost caution, like its offsprings, the economy of "boundless wealth" and the physics of "boundless energy"? Lest evil grow all over?

13 Zero-free

The "configurational number" stands for articulation, and a zero-free position-value numeral system could stand for counting as distinct from quantifying. As the biologist Adolf Portmann remarked, our ten-based system is indeed natural in the sense of relying on a basic biological truth, that we have ten fingers, ten thus being a digit like the others.[8] The zero turns it into a number, an artificial construct using placeholders instead of digits. The digit ten (write it "t") for our tenth finger (Latin *digitus* for finger) turns now into a number composed of two placeholders, or to be more precise, of a digit and a non-digit – the non-digit which has turned digits into placeholders, into ciphers, into non-digits.

The positional system with the zero seems to have been developed in India, though with a deep awareness of the true nature of the zero. We want to free the positional system from this metaphysical reminder of the antinomies of multiplicity. The positional system without the zero is a symbolic expression of counting with our fingers rather than with the *abacus*. Ten is the tenth digit, our tenth finger, for which we may also show our ten fingers. To count further, like the children, we show our ten fingers, then one for eleven. To put this in writing, we write a 1 and then a second 1 to the left to indicate that we have already counted once ten, but this is not a digit, just an index, a pointer like the particle "the", meaningless without its substantive, like the predicate without its verb. As language philosopher Melchior Palágyi (the inventor of the four-dimensional space-time of relativity theory, 1901) noted, language, like our eyes, deploys a dual means to grasp a single reality.[9] "The cat jumps" uses two expressions — "the cat" and "jumps" — to speak of one action, the cat's jump. By seeing them as autonomous and making them into "words", the cat's jump is divided and recombined into "the cat" "jumps."

The characters to the left of the first digit are not digits. In zero-free counting, ten is followed by eleven up to nineteen and, well, let us call it "tenteen", then comes twenty-one. "Ten" is a digit, our tenth finger, whereas "twenty", "thirty," up to “tenty” are just prefixes, as meaningless without their digit as is the prefix “un” in “undo” without the “do”. Then come the hundreds as second-order prefixes. The digit “t” disposes of the non-digit zero, showing it as superfluous, an excess over numbers, and supernumerary for counting. The zero-free positional system would then also help to recover the concept of number as an agglutinative reality (the prefixes and suffixes as inflections of the word) more than just a logistical tool — similar to the original language as the articulation of the primeval one.

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[8] A. Portmann, *An den Grenzen des Wissens*, 1974.

[9] M. Palágyi, *Neue Theorie des Raumes und der Zeit*, 1901.

We could then speak of the nine hundred tenty-one (9t1) nights and Ali Baba and his thirtyten (3t) thieves, disposing of 1001 and 40 as misleading artefacts using the zero, a *fake* digit, a non-digit, removing it from the operational, explicit level, but of course keeping it at the implicit, axiomatic level defining positionality. Writing, for instance, 10 implicitly assumes an infinity of empty spaces to the left as the very principle of positionality – also, writing this text assumes an indefinite sequence of possible characters to the right, as opposed to speech, which does not come as a sequence of separate sounds.

Like the configurational number, which recovers the concept of number as an articulation, as a symbolic expression of the richness of being, the zero-free positional system could be a step toward unthinking the zero and recovering the concept of counting as distinct from quantifying. The vernacular counts zero-free, as with dates and names. The 12th of July 1923 is a semantic hierarchy: 12 is a number, July is a name, and 1923 is a symbol, in this case, that of the Christian era. And while “Joe Smith” may be used as a dummy, many people called “Joe Smith” actually exist, but the zero, the placeholder made digit, the true dummy, does not exist. As Béla Tábor remarked, an original, healthy language like the Bible dislikes the use of dummies and prefers to say metonymically “Israel”, and “Jacob” instead of just “any nation”, and “any person” as empty placeholders.[10] Our electronic technology resting on the on-off logic of Boolean algebra ought to be appropriately called “cipheral” instead of “digital”, since it relies fundamentally on the non-digit zero, a cipher for the absence of a digit. One might even surmise that the latter’s power comes, very much in the sense of black magic, from calling it a digit, from this misuse of language.

A zero-free arithmetic would still allow addition and subtraction as usual but set a limit to the free manipulation of numbers, show the artificiality of multiplication, and allow recovery of the notion of harmonic division, of division in proportion instead of an arbitrary division – recover the idea of multiplicity as the result of the natural division of being instead of an arbitrary addition. Half a year is still meaningful, but one nineteenth of a year would already sound more artificial, and half an egg is no egg. As Palágyi notes, an archaic language like the Hungarian still remembers that one eye is just “half an eye”.

14 Conclusion

The vernacular follows Bertrand Russell’s idea of the “logical types”, the zero-free logic of the narrative, the logic of number expressing the richness of being. In contrast, the modern concept of number, which produces the limitless but arid economy, relies on the supernumerary element zero, which ended disrupting Cantor’s set theory[11] and its consequent expression — resulting in mathematics resting on shaky foundations, the very image of modernity free not of its limits, but its sense of limits.

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[10] B. Tábor, *A zsidóság két útja* (Jewry at the Crossroads), 1939.

[11] Due to the collapse of the hierarchy of logical types, to the identification of “nothing” with its signifier, the meta-sign *zero* (Brian Rotman, *Signifying Nothing – The Semiotics of Zero*, 1987)

So, what should we do with the zero? As Martin Heidegger might have said: use it like you use your car or your fridge, but don't stick to it, remember that you can do very well without it, maybe even better. Since, as Ivan Illich said, "when I walk, I discover that I have feet."

Acknowledgment

I thank Jonathan Uhlaner for many pleasant and enlightening conversations.

Think from the Abyss*

by Gustavo Esteva

We are not at the brink of the abyss. We have already fallen into it. We are in free fall down an abyss that seems quite unfathomable. We cannot see the bottom of it.

We are not a “broken state”, a malicious and elusive category that a few years ago was used by the United States’ State Department to rank us alongside Congo and Pakistan. But we no longer know exactly what we are. The country that we had has been falling apart and we do not even know where to find some of its parts.

After attending to this new call of the *Universidad de la Tierra* in Chiapas [University of the Soil], I propose we start off by briefly reviewing the evidence of the disaster, aware of how painful it is to do so.

The disaster

For many years now, Mexico produced the richest man in the world and also the group around him who are in the first places of those scandalous lists of world potentates that today are richer than ever. Mexico also produces some of the poorest poor of the planet and a growing number of Mexicans have joined the poor category. These are not two separate facts. They are the same. What increasingly destroys the country is this maddening machine that accumulates immense riches for some and despoils and impoverishes the majority. The system, capitalism,

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is a device to impoverish the many – as Jean Robert and Majid Rahnema have very well explained in the book that had just been presented here.[1] This machine, this way of organizing society for the benefit of a few, is the root and the background of our disasters. Let's review some of them.

- A fifth of Mexicans have had to leave the country to go to Canada and the United States…and even as far away as Japan. Ours is one of the largest emigrations in history. Each year, hundreds of thousands keep trying to cross this escape door, although it is increasingly closed. Where are our borders now? Our people over our legal borders, who haven't been with us for years, continue to feel Mexican and their remittances are a condition of subsistence for millions of people. The police from there operates and directs the police here. Transnational corporations increasingly control larger sectors of our economy, and reinforce habits, products, attitudes, and music that displace everything that is ours. What is today the current outline of the country in geographical, economic, cultural terms? How did we allow this tragic dismantling?

- The number of crimes daily committed in Mexico is staggering. Its barbarity shrivels the heart. There is no longer a safe place and in large parts of the national territory all civilized forms of coexistence have been lost; only the force of the strongest remains. Violence, more and more general, becomes more and more random. Activists, social leaders, and journalists continue to be favorite targets, but senseless murders also increase. The government calls them "collateral casualties" and intends to hide them under the rug of its criminal war. Women, as always, suffer more than men. Violence has invaded the domestic sphere and is established as a norm of the relationship.

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[1] [TN] Esteva refers to *La puissance des pauvres*, Actes Sud, 2008.

- These two kinds of brutal violence – the one that separates people from their family, their community and their country and the one that kills and maims indiscriminately – also manifests itself as brutal aggression against *Madre Tierra* [Mother Earth]. Dispossessed villagers are now forced to destroy with very harmful forms of exploitation the lands that they had been protecting until now. What remains of a less and less rich territory, that portion of *Madre Tierra* once considered among the most diverse in the world and described as a cornucopia, has been continually destroyed with the complicity of many.

- The injustice, oppression, and arbitrariness that previously affected, above all, the poorest has become generalized. The institutions created to protect against violence, to offer solidarity in the face of misfortune and helplessness, and to guarantee respect for the freedom of people are producing the opposite. The character of our political regime appears in all its nakedness, in which the laws are formulated and applied as a class privilege. "Our political class" Javier Sicilia has said, "practices a form of crime as unpunished as the crime it claims to fight against". By turning fraud into a "way of life" and by "making depredation, pillage, and crime simply management techniques, the real difference between legal and illegal crime is only a difference in intensity" (*Proceso* 1811, 17/ 6/11). Instead of formal structures regulated by general norms known and accepted by the social fabric, most of what remains of the country is under the control of mafias and gangs that operate outside all legal and institutional norms, within and outside the state apparatuses. Mexico suffered from this condition for a long time, which was one of the secrets of the PRI's survival [Institutional Revolutionary Party]. But the point that has been reached is unprecedented and is a clear result of the monstrous and absurd nature of Calderón's war, which turned a public health issue into a national security issue and tackled it, to the core, with rotten apparatuses.

- Although we do not want to admit it, we are in the middle of a civil war. It is among the worst of its kind, because it has been losing a clear notion of the contending sides and there is no longer a possible winner. As Subcomandante Marcos recently wrote, "this war…is destroying the last fortress that a nation has left: the social fabric" ("Apuntes sobre las guerras" [Notes on wars], First letter to don Luis Villoro Toranzo from the insurgent subcomandante Marcos, January-February 2011).

Six months ago, I wrote that "a gelatinous horror increasingly threatens our daily lives. In many places you can no longer go outside at certain hours. This undeclared curfew sets limits and guides behavior. In a variety of spheres there are not even curfews that delimit what we can or cannot do. We no longer know where the often-deadly dangers lie." (*La Jornada*, 7/25/11).

The situation has worsened since then. We are truly in free fall into an unfathomable abyss.

The pain of awareness

Let us cultivate the pain that all this provokes, a pain that would become even more intense if we continued the enumeration. Let's not kill it.

Allow me a diversion. Because of the Germans, the meaning of the word aesthetic is narrow. Long ago it meant to feel, to perceive with the senses. Once, we were all esthetes, we all felt. Traces of this origin are in the rarely used word, hyperesthesia. It means excessive and painful sensitivity. But it is also in a word that we all use, anesthesia, which is the artificially induced insensitivity to pain, the lack of sensation.

With neither masochism nor anesthesia, let us try to feel thoroughly, without veils, pretexts, or reservations, the deep pain that can cause us to perceive the state in which we find ourselves.

Being restless would be a disease or anomaly if there was no reason to be so, if it were only a pathological anxiety without contact with reality. But there are plenty of reasons for the current restlessness, that restlessness that puts us on alert when something is wrong and tells us we must do something. In this situation, going to tranquilizers requires denying what we perceive to keep us quiet, calm, lulled. That is what they want to do today: anesthetize us, paralyze us, avoid the action induced by a painful awareness.

In traditional cultures, pain is interpreted as a challenge that demands a response, and suffering appears as an inevitable part of a conscious confrontation with reality. In modern society, however, we are taught to interpret pain as an indication we need the comforts and pampering provided by doctors, for whom pain is a technical problem. It is about killing the pain, keeping us anesthetized. Years ago, Ivan Illich said that the increasing use of devices to kill pain turns us into insensitive spectators of our own decadence.

That is what we experience today. Confronting the daily evidence of the growing disaster, the consumption of chemical or discursive tranquilizers increases. With legal or illegal drugs, with cocaine or with Prozac, Valium, or simple aspirin, we lose our vitality and responsiveness, we become passive and dull, we stop feeling... The same thing happens when we consume speeches instead of drugs. Some politicians try to deny the evidence and continually strive to hide it behind clouds of statistics and rhetoric. Others use a kind of apocalyptic joke to carry water to their ideological mill: they say it is enough to pay attention to them and to use the aspirin they prescribe, which will administer until the cancer disappears. The elections are already inducing even some of the most knowledgeable among us to divert our attention away from what matters most and to instead entertain ourselves with the three-ring circus that is already advertised everywhere. They hide the pain and shame it causes us so that we take refuge in a game of illusions that condemns us to paralysis, so that we do not attempt the action that we would carry out if we fully felt what is happening to us and our country.

I bring all of this up to explore why we got carried away to this point, despite the evidence of what was coming and despite being duly warned. On November 20, 1999, for example, Subcomandante Marcos described in *La Realidad* the characteristics of the Fourth World War. What he said then very accurately anticipated what I have just described. He also explained the collapse of the old strategies and the old conceptions of waging war and analyzed the logic and scope of the new one. In June 2007 he expanded the description. He made it clear that there was finally a completely total world war. He told us, a year before the fall of Lehman Brothers, that "companies and states collapse in minutes, but not from the blows of proletarian revolutions but because of the storm of financial hurricanes." He also pointed out that neoliberalism "destroys all the discursive fallacies of capitalist ideology: in the new world order there is no democracy, no liberty, no equality, no fraternity" (*Siete piezas sueltas del rompecabezas mundial* [Seven Loose Pieces of the World Puzzle], June 2007). We even had some lines of the path that we could have taken: it was at the time of *La Otra Campaña*.

My topic today is the why. We are facing a serious national emergency that requires immediate, urgent collective action. We cannot wait. Why are there so many waiting? It seems that we prefer to ingest some of the drugs that I mentioned before and take refuge in the passivity and paralysis that they produce.

The democratic illusion

I have the impression that the most serious of the paralyzing drugs that are distributed among us is called the democratic illusion. It is massively consumed, in full view of everyone, until a deep collective intoxication occurs.

> One understands – with don Antonio Machado – that arguments will never supersede beliefs; and the belief in democracy is especially resistant to them. But the fact that this belief is also impervious to repeated experience seems to point to it as a formidable, armored belief (Emmanuel Lizcano, *Diagonal Web*, 11/28/11)

But we are not only dealing with a belief: it is already a form of fundamentalism. More than ten years ago the magazine *Archipiélago* (No. 9) pointed out:

> At the point where democracy affirms itself as a fetish of the tribe, it begins to undermine itself, to establish itself as a naked form of domination, as a gross unreason with no other purpose than to perpetuate the intolerable state of affairs for so many... Is not this our peculiar variant of fundamentalism? Does it not consider itself to be the only true path instead of just one of the possible or desirable ones? Does it not share with other fundamentalisms an analogous pretense of definitive truth and inalienable conquest?... Does it not adorn itself with the same blindness with respect to itself? Is not the belief in Democracy under the same *illusion* as the belief in the Koran or in the divine nature of Kings?

Indeed, we are in front of a form of fundamentalism that consecrates as a supreme ideal, untouchable institutions that generate only illusions of democracy and turn it into a spectacle. The pontiffs of the democratic religion tirelessly repeat that the electoral path is the only way to transform the country and add that the armed path is unacceptable. Thus, a double fallacy is revealed. On the one hand, the electoral path is also that of arms. It is strewn with corpses and inevitably leads to a regime based on violence. The monopoly on "legitimate violence" that was given to the government to protect citizens is increasingly being used against them. The electoral route only serves to define, cunningly, who will have control of the trigger.

On the other hand, insinuating that the only alternative to the electoral path is the armed path traps us in the obsession that only through the seizure of state power – with votes or guns – can we propose change. We need to escape from this trap. The current struggle does not consist of conquering an oppressive device with the illusion that it will be possible to give it emancipatory functions. What is needed is to dismantle this state machinery – as Marx clearly pointed out when he examined the case of the Paris Commune. Foucault has described this in elegant and contemporary terms. He pointed out that some propose to replace the ideology without modifying the institutions and others propose to change them without altering the ideological apparatus. Some say, "everything will go well if I am there"; others say, "with adjustments here and there, correcting vices of the past, we will solve all problems". What is needed, Foucault stressed, is a simultaneous upheaval of ideologies and institutions. It is useless to replace the captain of the ship, if the ship itself is the problem. And it is sinking.

Going beyond democracy does not mean going back to the authoritarian traditions that marked the left in the 20th century. On the contrary. It is about combating them in all their forms, both the openly dictatorial ones and those that disguise themselves as representative democracies. It is about making clear that the famous "majority government" is profoundly authoritarian and that the elections are just a smoke screen to hide it; that not only will we be facing the ignominy of elections this year, but we will also be facing the ignominy of the vote. This presents us with a very serious ethical and political problem, since it antagonizes many Mexicans who nevertheless believe they are on our side, who also want the change, who consider the situation just as unbearable as we feel it...

But all this is nothing but a collection of arguments that have obviously been unable to unseat democratic beliefs. The followers of such religion and its fundamentalist pontiffs are multiplying, and their church seems to be consolidating.

Is Raúl Zibechi right when he argues that the problem lies in the lack of options? People resort to chemical or discursive drugs because though they recognize the seriousness of the situation, they do not know what to do and they cannot find a way out of the quagmire. The paralysis comes from this specific anguish, from this feeling of helplessness. Drugs are used only to calm it down, to attenuate its effects, so as not to feel it.

Zibechi rightly says that the traditional movements of the left, as well as the new social movements, seem paralyzed "because the world in which they were born and grew up in has been rapidly disappearing." He is also right when he emphasizes that "it is not about changing the world, as if it was something external to us, but about changing ourselves with the world." Finally, he is also right in arguing that "neither capitalism nor the world-system will fall on its own", that "we need to dismantle them" and that "if we succeed, we will fall with them". "It would be vain" – concludes Zibechi – "to pretend that we can save ourselves by the sole fact of believing ourselves to be revolutionaries". Zibechi describes the predicament that seems to befall anti-capitalists everywhere in the world in no uncertain terms:

> We do not have strategies to defeat capital, neither electoral nor insurrectionary, and we do not even have an alternative imaginary to the polls or the seizure of the palace. Second, we have not set up self-sustaining economies, capable of sustaining life and encouraging those below to devote all their energies to these tasks. In short, if we suc-

> ceed against capital, we do not know what to replace capitalism with, except to insist on a repetition of that "state socialism" (which was really an authoritarian state capitalism) that failed in the late 1980s (*La Jornada,* 11/18/11)

The awakening

Let us carefully examine this hypothesis, which helps to understand the relative paralysis that we are experiencing, and the extent to which millions of people remain prisoners of the democratic illusion. This analysis, however, does not see the other side of the coin. We find ourselves in a radical situation. We can observe a collective awakening produced by the coincidence of a very adverse general situation – disasters – and the general evidence that the conventional response, what governments and capitals do, aggravates this condition and leads to dead ends. Thus, the rupture arises. One begins to think the unthinkable.

The radical situation we are experiencing today stems from the general condition in which the vast majority of the population feels their way of life is at risk, although only a minority sees their survival directly threatened. Jobs, assets, expectations are lost. Solid securities that were the mortar of social life vanish into thin air. In this general condition, it becomes increasingly clear to everyone that the responses of the State and the market are useless and often aggravate the difficulties instead of overcoming them.

Awakening often manifests itself in a chaotic and unpredictable way, like a lightning in a serene night, an illumination, an explosion. Overnight, what was considered normal takes on the appearance of sleepwalking. Suddenly immense cracks that were there for a long time are perceived but we had stopped seeing them as they had became part of the landscape. Some of these outbursts are ephemeral, mere fireworks. But the collective awakening that characterizes a radical situation does not work that way. It takes time to mature. Its own time. It has its calendar and its geography.

The awakening in the rebellious daily dispersion

Little by little, in the social base, people substitute nouns such as education, health or housing, which would be "needs" whose satisfaction depends on public or private entities, for verbs such as learning, healing or living, which would express the attempt to recover personal and collective agency and enable autonomous paths of social transformation.

- We have reached a point where those who are not afraid of hunger, which grips a billion people every day, are now afraid to eat, because we already know about the harmful ingredients of the food offered on the market. But people are breaking that dependency. The inhabitants of the cities begin to produce their own food. Half of what they eat in Havana is grown right there. In Pasadena, California, three tons a year of more than 400 vegetables are grown on just over 300 square meters. Food is grown even in the center of Mexico City. At the same time, urban consumers and rural producers unite to create an alternative to the market. The traditional struggle for land becomes defense of the territory. In Jaltepec, a couple of years ago, it was said by the *Foro Nacional Tejiendo Resistencia por la Defensa de Nuestros Territorios* [National Forum Weaving Resistance for the Defense of Our Territories]: "We are in resistance. We will not allow ourselves to be defeated by this new neoliberal offensive of dispossession. We deeply believe in the value of our assemblies, in the exercise of authority seen as a service, the collective property of the land and the reconstitution of our territories as *pueblos*, as institutions from which we will obtain strength" (http://www.huizache.org/noticias/declaracion-jaltepec). Four years ago, the

Zapatistas announced the *Campaña Mundial por la Defensa de las Tierras y los Territorios Indígenas, Campesinos y Autónomos en Chiapas, México y el Mundo* [World Campaign for the Defense of Indigenous, Peasant and Autonomous Lands and Territories in Chiapas, Mexico and the World]. All these expressions are part of the idea of food sovereignty that has defined the *Vía Campesina*, the largest peasant organization in history: it is about defining for ourselves what we eat… and producing it on our own terms (See *Nyéleni Declaration*, at http://www.nyeleni.org/spip.php?article291).

- The educational system is in crisis: it does not prepare people for life or work and marginalizes the majority. Despite the evident and well-documented failure of the school and the daily experience of the damage it causes, there is still a widespread struggle to "get an education". Most have been educated in the idea that only in this way will they be able to "be someone" and stop suffering the discrimination that is exercised against all "nobodies". But people have been reacting. Alongside the attempts to reform and improve the system and to promote alternative forms of education, a vigorous movement is increasingly spreading in another direction. Autonomous and free learning practices have become more popular than ever, and the movement is generating, on the fringes, its own institutional arrangements against and beyond the system. Such practices, based on their own theoretical apparatus, go beyond current frameworks. They recover ancient learning traditions and introduce contemporary technologies in the methods of learning and studying as joyful and free activities. It is a peculiar movement. It is possibly the largest in the world, with perhaps billions of people involved. But it is basically invisible and many of those who participate in it do not feel part of a social or political movement in the conventional sense of the term, although they are excited to meet others like them, establish horizontal relationships and share experiences. In general, they are fully aware of the meaning of what they do: they fully experience the radical nature of breaking with all forms of education in order to learn and study in freedom.

- The health system is increasingly inefficient, discriminatory and counterproductive. The iatrogenic effect has already been docukmented: doctors and hospitals produce more diseases than they cure. The production, distribution and consumption of health is the second largest sector of the economy in the world, involving a growing number of people and its expansion is as rapid as it failure. People have reacted. Reform efforts continue and alternative therapies proliferate. At the same time, initiatives are spreading to openly challenge the health system itself, to break with the dominant notions of disease, health and even body and mind, while nurturing autonomous healing practices, recovering therapeutic traditions that had been marginalized and disqualified by the medical profession and enable healthier behaviors and more humane forms of treatment, rooted in the home and community. Their new institutional arrangements are already beginning to take shape.

- The disasters that usually accompany public and private developments are still spreading and prompting the proliferation of homeless people. At the same time, the mobilizations that tend to stop them, to reformulate the urban sphere and begin to create different living conditions in the cities, to even rethink even the very notion of the city, are multiplying. Self-building practices that defied urban expansion for a long time are consolidated and strengthened, enriching them with contemporary technologies. Styles of dwelling that for many years were the characteristic way of building for the so-called "marginals" are now spreading to other social strata. Dozens of "transition cities" define a radical attempt to transform urban life. The occupy movement, neighborhood regeneration efforts, and the creation of new community areas are spreading everywhere. Struggles proliferates to bring political mutation from the countryside to the city and create coalitions of territorial defense – against an airport, a new highway, public and private developments. They tend to become the seed to install autonomous forms of government. Initiatives aimed at recovering self-mobility, on foot or by bicycle, and actively resisting subordination to motor vehicles are part of these movements.

- Although the Walmartization of the world continues and a few companies extend their predatory capacity causing all kinds of damage, a new era of direct exchange that takes place outside the capitalist market is also expanding. Markets in which producers and consumers abandon their abstract condition to instead engage in direct dealings between people are prospering. Local currencies which operate as means of payment and communal mortar to facilitate the various forms of barter, are being reborn. Many different names are given to exchange methods that in many cases abandon the direct use of money-commodity and seek to replace the abstract market with relations between parties that know each other, trust and do not exploit the other. In all cases, these initiatives that openly challenge the fiction of the self-regulating market that has been used to disguise corporate dominance.

New attitudes, well-rooted in their physical and cultural contexts, are manifesting themselves in all spheres of daily life, thriving within new political horizons, beyond dominant ideologies and conventional patterns. Such initiatives gain increasing visibility in times of crisis, since they offer creative options for survival and effectively resist dominant policies and projects.

It is true that many people participate in these initiatives without abandoning the dominant individualism. They not only adapt the attitude to themselves, to their own satisfaction, but firmly reject its social and political meaning. But it is equally true that some even they begin to react against the prevailing hyper-individualism, to suffer its consequences and to open themselves up to others in an attempt to redefine themselves in their social condition.

Many of these initiatives appear as survival reactions, in difficult and even desperate situations. They are generally disjointed from each other: they do not spring up as an expression of a collective and organized movement, but this also reveals their character. They are framed in a radical situation, in that collective awakening in which people with the most diverse characteristics agree in a decision of common awareness and manage by themselves to find answers that have a common denominator: their non-capitalist character. They reflect with full clarity, effective responses to the double alienation of the capitalist relations of production: that of the fruits of labor and that of the creative activity itself. They are also heretical reactions to the religion of money.

The street awakening

Multiple manifestations of the collective awakening that is currently sweeping the world have had great visibility. The Arab Spring, the assault on public squares that spreads everywhere, the massive eruptions as intense as the violent repression that tries to extinguish it, the tenacious marches that defies everything... although they reflect and express the awakening street, we should not confuse them with it.

The mobilizations that took the constituted powers, the citizens and the political parties by surprise, are courageous and coherent initiatives that challenge, sometimes spectacularly, the normalized, foreseeable and predictable behaviors that has been imposed on us. "*Mis sueños no caben tus urnas*" [My dreams do not fit your ballot boxes], they said in *Plaza del Sol*. "To have demands would be to think that there is someone up there who can attend to them," they said in the Zuccotti Park on Wall Street; "and that is exactly what we no longer believe." This is the novelty, which reveals the character of these massive actions.

Those who present themselves as mere managers of the crisis can only offer a specific channel to direct the forces that go beyond and precede them; those who continually wash their hands off measures that are not only unpopular, but unpopular because, according to them, they have no choice but to apply them; those who continually demand "due obedience" to decisions that should be questioned and who therefore criminalize all dissidence; those who install what Hannah Arendt called "nobody's government", one of the cruelest and most tyrannical forms of government because none is the authentic author of actions and events and everyone acts as mere cogs in a total machine that no one is in charge of; all these "powers" that preach, generalize, and establish homogeneous forms of behavior are trapped in the norm and subject to the dispositions of the market and the state which configured and molded from above, act as the condition for the machinery to be able to keep functioning. As Amador Fernández-Savater (*through Europe*, 12/06/11) reminded us, it is about making us internalize these imposed automatisms so that we do what we have to do, see what we have to see, say what we have to say and think what is prescribed to think, that is, that we become, internally and externally, what those powers establish. Obviously, it is precisely this attitude that led us to the current catastrophes.

What we have been seeing throughout 2011 fits well into what Hannah Arendt called "the action", when anyone, ordinary men and women, people without leaders and generally without parties or specific ideologies, come out of their isolation and impotence and join their equals to start something new, to radically challenge those automatisms, to resist what it means to obey and to follow. These initiatives, emphasizes Fernández-Savater, "do not entrust command to those who know, but rather start from the principle that we can all think; they do not have a single face, but precisely allow each and every one of the singular faces to fit; they do not manage what is there but collectively invent new answers to common problems. Plurality, invention, thought: this is the dance of the nobody against the "Nobody's Government".

And here, in this radical attitude that is spreading everywhere, it seems inevitable to remember the moment when we were told, quite clearly: "*Behind us, are you*"[2]…

"Overcoming the barricades of resistance and self-defense, the living forces of the whole world are waking up from a long sleep," commented Raoul Vaneighem. "Its offensive, irresistible and peaceful, will sweep away all the obstacles raised against the desire to live, that feeds those who, unmentionable, are born and reborn every day. The violence of a world to be created will supplant the violence of a world that is being destroyed". To shore up his hope, Vaneighem mentions the Zapatistas, who "have undertaken resistance against all forms of power, organizing themselves and practicing autonomy. These 'faceless', who have everyone's face, are about to give humanity back its true face," because "in the crisis of our parliamentary democracies corroded by corruption everywhere and also manipulated everywhere by multinational companies". They invent a society that frees "daily life from the economic enterprise in which it is reduced to an object of mercantile transaction", that is, frees daily life from the capitalist prison. (*L'État n'est plus rien, soyons tout*, 2010; there is a translation by Raúl Ornelas).

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[2] [TN] *Detrás de nosotros estamos ustedes*, which is the title of Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos' book.

The mind awakening

The current collective awakening is generating new knowledge production centers outside public or private research centers and conventional university institutions. New technologies are born in these centers, based on significant theoretical innovations, which reformulate the perception of the world and introduce new methodologies to interact with it that question the dominant paradigms. As Foucault suggested, there the insurrection of subjugated knowledges is strengthened and deepened: the historical contents that had been buried or masked within functional coherences and formal systematizations are recovered; the specific, local, regional, differentiated knowledge that was disqualified because it was considered incompetent, insufficiently elaborated, naive and hierarchically inferior to the scientific is reassessed; and erudite knowledge is juxtaposed and combined with local memories, to form a historical knowledge of struggle, which requires demolishing the tyranny of globalizing discourses, with its hierarchy and with the privileges that derive from the scientific classification of knowledge, which has intrinsic effects of power.

The autonomous enterprise of thinking, the radical challenge to the institutional production of the statements with which we govern our behavior, has been taking various names, which attempt to go beyond conventional research, even in its form of participatory research. It is called reflection on action or militant or insurgent research and appears everywhere, the same in the *Colectivo Situaciones* in Argentina, in the *Universidad de la Tierra.* in California or in the heart of Italy. This is a really general phenomenon that fits well with the state of things, when the dominant ways of thinking are no longer useful to understand what is happening, much less to build the new world.

Articulate the rebellion

The civil war and the criminal control of social reality, which in many parts of the nation already make a normal daily life impossible, let alone permit an election, is expanding and intensifying. It is possible that its extension to the entire territory constitutes the most realistic outcome. The hypothesis is taking shape that the government has no real interest in stopping it. On the contrary. As they say in Honduras, power is afraid that people are losing their fear. In the same way that in specific localities people openly prefer the disgraceful control of the army to that of criminals, the government could be waiting for this feeling to become general to find a social justification to legally consolidate the undeclared state of exception that we now live in, to deepen the repression and to stop the popular initiatives.

Right here, in his speech at the *Primer Seminario Internacional* [First International Seminar] (December 2009-January 2010), Javier Sicilia pointed out that "the crises we are experiencing... place us in a state of revolution, that is, in need of profound change." He warned that it is a revolution of a different nature from those we know and remember, because the idea of revolution that comes from the past has become infeasible. The new revolution, for Sicilia, which continues to be in the heart of Zapatismo, has barely been understood. And this is the current challenge: a challenge to understanding and to imagination, based on the explicit recognition that change will come from below, from the people themselves, because that is how true changes occur. This revolution is an art and requires recognizing in people, in ordinary men and women, the artists capable of giving shape and substance to the new creation.

Nobody knows how to make a revolution. It is not something that someone can be planned. Yet we cannot continue to wait. We are really facing a national emergency and we know well that the political classes will not dare to declare it. To do so would show their uselessness and their complicity in it: they did not know how to foresee it, they have contributed to creating it, and they do not know how to face it.

We need to declare the national emergency ourselves and arrange the consequent action

Our declaration would support the collective awakening in which we find ourselves. It would not be in a vacuum. It could be shown that, contrary to what Zibechi thinks, an "alternative imaginary to the ballot box or the seizure of the palace" has been built from unexpected places (*abajo y a la izquierda*), to defeat capital by means that are neither electoral nor violent. It would reveal that hypotheses and theories have been generated from the social and political soil that allow us to recognize the oppressive nature of the polls and of armed insurrections and to formulate options. The new imaginary, which takes increasingly clear forms, precisely delimits the path. We have already learned to refuse the construction of promised lands, alternative visions of society as a whole, alternative nation projects... we identify in all these formulas useful illusions for manipulation and control, not for authentic transformative action. We now trust that the people themselves, from their own spheres, in their assemblies and forums, from their diversity, will be able to imagine and build, one by one the ingredients of the new world, which, as always, will emerge from the womb of the dying society.

Zibechi says that "we have not set up self-sustaining economies, capable of sustaining life and encouraging those at the bottom to dedicate all their energies to these tasks." That is why he thinks that if we succeed against capital, we will not know what to replace capitalism with, because we only have already failed formulas. I have tried to show the opposite. I have mentioned examples of the ways in which millions of people have been organizing life-sustaining economies, knowing that if they don't, they are doomed to extinction. Initiatives such as urban agriculture, the defense of the territory, alternative ways of learning, healing and living, community policing modalities that underpin their own notion of security, initiatives that effectively recompose the social fabric in neighborhoods and communities, the rediscovered capacities to think for oneself, all of them non-capitalist in character, are not acts of the fringe or of small dissident sects. They are initiatives that, far from obeying and repeating the imposed automatisms seeking survival options in the market or in the State, claim ways of living well and demonstrate that despite all the restrictions, against all odds, people can recover step by step their own means of subsistence and their creative capacity, breaking isolation and impotence.

Declaring a national emergency would not operate in a vacuum. It could illustrate in a thousand different ways how we can, wherever we find ourselves, in whatever our contexts and positions, tear apart the authoritarian fabrics in which we have been kept and take liberating action. In this way, the declaration would serve, above all, to avoid the trap of thinking that the mere replacement of leaders will allow us to face the current difficulties and that some of them have the recipes to overcome these difficulties. It is a trap that millions of Mexicans may already have fallen into, perhaps convinced that there is no other option.

The declaration would also serve to show that it is not necessary to forge a prior consensus among citizens for them to affiliate with a candidate or choose to vote blank or abstain. It could put the election itself in perspective and draw attention away from the campaigns, showing their radical irrelevance to everything that matters.

The us that needs to declare a state of emergency and confront it is still tenuous, vague, disjointed... It does not have a clear profile. This corresponds in part to the new forms of social protagonism, because the subject of the transformation, the one who is taking the initiative in his hands, does not adopt the traditional forms of class organizations and party structures. That does not mean that organization is lacking, it exists in the social base and, in these times, it has been strengthening, despite the difficulties of the days and the permanent aggressions. With an infinite number of names: forums, coalitions, coordinators, spaces, congresses, alliances...; from the simple organizations of the *barrio*, of the community, of the town, organizational forms have multiplied that are already confronting the mafias, the political and economic gangs, legal and illegal that try to control all the territories.

Declaring national emergency against them would be a way of articulating these multiple initiatives in a common endeavor that must carefully avoid the character of a revolt. It would not be a sudden outburst, which can leave lasting traces, like lava from a volcano, but which disappears as quickly as it arose; it could not even be seen as the simultaneous eruption of dormant volcanoes. Nor would it be analogous to episodes that became symbols of lasting transformation, such as the taking of the Bastille, the Winter Palace, or the cry of Miguel Hidalgo.

We need a rebellion – the kind of feat that is the substance of all true revolution. It is about the humiliated and offended, those of us who have been continuously dominated by an oppressive system that has been stripping us of everything that is ours and that in these years threatens what we have left our dignity and our social fabric. It is about all of us fighting the political events of domination.

It seems that we are ready for this novel rebellion because the conviction is increasingly shared, based on the experience of all the previous struggles, that we cannot give up the power, the command, the ability to lead the transformation. We are no longer willing to delegate all our capabilities to a group of leaders, even those emerging from our own ranks, so that they shape the new legal and institutional framework to limit the new state of affairs. In order not to repeat the historical experience in which what has been achieved is expropriated time and again, today we seek to maintain control of the process. We have been learning to do it in assemblies and parliaments of increasingly broad coalitions, in which agreements are reached between those who come with temporary representation and subject to precise mandates, always exposed to the revalidation of those represented. None of this, which requires sociological and political imagination and creativity, must be decided in advance. It will emerge in the process itself, when required.

The small-scale initiatives that I have been mentioning are a clear anticipation of the society to come, but they must be carried out against an aggressive and hostile system that constantly harasses them and causes serious wear and tear. The uprising is needed – an uprising that operates by contagion (as has always been the case with Zapatismo), rather than by clandestine strategic agreement from the leaders. It is true that fighting is abominable, but that should not weaken our commitment to this militancy. By connecting our desires with reality, weaving anger and discontent into action, instead of withdrawing them into the forms of theoretical or political representation, we will give them full revolutionary force (Foucault, 1983, p. xiii).

Declaring a national emergency and acting accordingly, that is, abandoning "normal" and normalized reactions, as if it were possible to wait for the change – that we urgently need – to fall from some political sky, can constitute a revolutionary act, because it would establish a new possibility. Cultural borders would have been transgressed to open a new path that did not seem possible.

The days of fury in the streets and in the squares, as well as the silent actions in the houses and in the *patios*, follow the gradations of revolt and rebellion. Through them, a type of revolutionary contagion seems to take place without the Bastille or the Winter Palace and lacking leaders like Zapatas, Villas, Carranzas and Obregones. It exists as an initiative of the people themselves, of ordinary men and women, of the common people... the unsubdued, the rebels, the dreamers, who know well the appropriate calendar and geography for their action. Thus, they exercise their power, which in these conditions is called dignity. From the womb of a shattered society, under unbearable threats, the new one is already being born. It was born to avoid the horror that harasses and overwhelms us and to contain the ongoing evils. It is also born to start a new path of transformation and regeneration.

Declaring the national emergency, by ourselves, will give visibility and dynamism to this new society. It will make it possible to agree on the effort and thus we will be able to get going with the urgency that is needed.

Fishy Biomass*

by Sajay Samuel & Dean Bavington

The Grand Banks off the island of Newfoundland on Canada's east coast once teemed with such an abundance of codfish that they reportedly choked the passage of vessels. About 500 years later, in 1992, fishing trawlers could find no cod, and officials declared a moratorium on the fishery. Little has changed since that disappearance of wild cod from the seas off Newfoundland and Labrador: both the fish and those who relied on hunting them are hard to find.

From the mid-19th century on, the cod fisheries on the Grand Banks have been objects of techno-scientific management. Processed through such algebraic machines as merchant capital, jiggers, and scientific models, codfish have been transmuted into biomass, fishermen transmogrified into labor, and coastal waters transformed into liquid farmlands. Merchant capital demanded that fish be harvested in the predictable patterns and quantity necessary to meet the loan repayment schedule. The resulting outsized technologies increased catch levels enough to occasionally not only pay off financiers but also to fatten profits. International agreements established national boundaries to police fishermen and capitalists, both foreign and domestic. And scientific theories of fish and men precisely calculated the maximum quantities of fish that could be harvested from the oceans in perpetuity.

Yet, within three generations of scientific manage-

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ment, the Grand Banks were emptied of commercially viable codfish stocks and have remained empty for almost two decades. In the absence of codfish, the labor force once employed on trawlers and fish factories has been redistributed as coal workers to the tar sands of Alberta, professional harvesters to the aquaculture industry, and tourist guides to the oceans. And those still wanting to fish cod for food are criminalized.[1] These fishermen have little to hope for without grasping the crucible in which codfish are transmogrified into saleable biomass.

A World Without Fish

Worldwide the oceans are emptying of fish. Since the 1990s, the catch of wild fish has steadily declined. Nowadays, even UN bureaucrats and fisheries scientists repeat in statistics what fishermen have been warning about in prose for years: that the earth's waters are being emptied of its creatures. Some 77% of global fish stocks are fully exploited or have collapsed.[2] The authoritative opinion suggests that all commercially valuable species will collapse if current trends continue.[3] Some four million commercial fishing vessels trawl the oceans capturing some 350 billion pounds of fish, twenty-five percent of which is discarded as waste, quaintly called

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1 The Telegram (2010). Recreational cod fishermen fined for illegal fishing. Accessed on January 15, 2011 at http://www.thetelegram.com/Business/Natural-resources/2010-04-09/article-1453916/Recreational-cod-fishermen-fined-for-illegal-fishing/1

2 FAO 2009. "The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2008" FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department. *Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations*. Rome; World Bank and FAO. 2009. *The Sunken Billions: The Economic Justification for Fisheries Reform*. Agriculture and Rural Development Series. Available from: http:// siteresources. worldbank.org /EXTARD/Resources/336681-1224775570533/ SunkenBillionsFinal.pdf.

3 Pauly D, Watson R, Alder J. (2005). Global trends in world fisheries: impacts on marine ecosystems and food security. *Philos Trans R Soc Lond B Biol Sci*.360:5-12

'bycatch'.[4] Predatory fish such as salmon, cod, and shark are being killed at rates threatening their existence.[5] Those that remain are emaciated by hunger because the prey they feed on is being harvested as fishmeal to fatten chicken, cows, and other fish.[6] The growing consumption of Omega 3 fats in the North is devastating the primary protein source of millions of fishing communities in the South.[7] Half of the fishy biomass served on tables in the North is now manufactured on watery farms.[8]

The collapse of the Newfoundland and Labrador cod fishery (once the world's largest ground fishery) has become legendary and reflects these global trends. The 1992 moratorium on cod fishing in these waters continues to this day. For three decades, the cod have not returned to the Grand Banks and have been recommended as a candidate for Canada's endangered species list.[9] The disappearance of codfish from these waters was neither a natural disaster nor an accident. Hunting for sport decimated the bison that roamed the North American plains in the millions and the passenger pigeons that once blotted out the noonday sun during their migratory journeys. But wanton destruction does not account for the disappearance of the codfish. That was the result of the scientific management of a natural resource.

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[4] Whitty, Julia.(2006) Fate of the Oceans, *Mother Jones* March/April 1-12. Accessed on August 7, 2007 at http://motherjones.com/politics/2006/03/fate-ocean

[5] Pauly Daniel., & Reg Watson. (2003). Counting down the last fish. *Scientific American* July, 42-47

[6] Oceana. (2009). *Hungry Oceans: what happens when all the prey are gone?* Accessed on July 5, 2009 at http://na.oceana.org/en/blog/2009/03/hungry-oceans

[7] Belton, B. (2004). High Seas Drifters: The reckless deep-sea gold rush that could turn the North American continental shelf into one giant factory-style fish farm. *The Ecologist*. August:32-38.

[8] Myers R, & Worm, B. (2003). Rapid worldwide depletion of predatory fish communities. *Nature* 423:280-283.

[9] Macintosh, Zoe.(2010). Some cod populations at historic lows. In *Live Science* accessed on May 15, 2010 at http://www.livescience.com/environment/cod-fish-endangered-100513.html. For the official pronouncement, see Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). (2003). COSEWIC Status Assessments, May 2003. Accessed on May 4, 2003 at: http://www.cosewic.gc.ca/ htmlDocuments/ Detailed_Species_Assessment_e.htm.

Yet, the scientific management of codfish continues to be peddled as the cure for its destruction. The failure *of* scientific resource management has been reinterpreted as a failure *in* it, prompting the search for new and improved versions of resource management. Accordingly, by overwhelming scientific consensus, 'overfishing' is now blamed for the disappearance of the cod. Rapacious industrialists, greedy consumers, ignorant fishermen, and pliant government bureaucrats have been fingered as the usual suspects in that familiar narrative, which takes as given objective science and neutral technology.[10] By constructing the problem as one of 'overfishing,' even more advanced scientific management of cod fishing is made plausible as a solution. Conveniently forgotten in this familiar story of the misuse of science and technology by capital is that until 1992, the cod-fisheries off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador were generally regarded as the outstanding exemplar of a scientifically managed natural resource.

Thus, the contemporary social imaginary runs on a narrow gauge where techno-science constitutes both rails of problem and solution.[11] For instance, the alternative to the permanent decline in wild cod stocks is to produce cod in egg-to-plate production systems that begin on fish farms.

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[10] Simpson, Jeffrey. (2010). Cod in Newfoundland: already seen that drama. *Toronto Globe and Mail*. May 13.

[11] "To remain internationally competitive, Canadian producers must sustain the relentless pursuit of technological and management improvements that allow Canada to gain stature in world aquaculture. The capability to produce and market desired products at internationally competitive prices is paramount to sustained development." This recommendation is the Canadian government's recommendation for its *Aquaculture Development Strategy*. Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada. Accessed online on May 10, 2010 at http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/aquaculture/ref/FADS-SFDA-eng.htm#tphp.

Such farmed cod are less like lions in a zoo used to titillate city folk and more like those domesticated game reared and shot in pens by trophy hunters. This aquaculture of cod is only the most recent phase in a more extended history of the scientific management of cod as a natural resource.

Killing Cod, Scientifically

For most of human history, fisheries have neither been managed nor been objects of techno-science. To this day, fishing is primarily a small-scale subsistence activity, subjected to the rhythms of season and tide, subservient to the nature of fish, and limited by fishermen's ability. By the latest count, such fishermen outnumber laborers on the world's industrialized fishing fleets by sixty. They receive only one-fifth of the public money from the industrial fleets, yet they catch just as many fish. They produce none of the pollutions routinely generated by industrial fishing, avoid harm to spawning fish and habitat, and waste none of their catch. Oriented primarily toward fishing for food instead of for profit, the vast array of artisanal fisheries that include the stilt fishermen of Sri Lanka, the horseback shrimpers of Belgium, the poisoned spear fishing of the now extinct Marsh Arabs of Iraq, and cormorant fishing in China, do not mistake fish for a commodity, fishermen for workers, or fishing as employment.[12]

Similarly, from the late eighteenth century until World War II, cod fishing off Newfoundland and Labrador was predominantly practiced by subsistence-oriented fishing families who produced salt-dried cod for trade with merchants.[13]

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[12] For an overview of the contrast between subsistence and industrialized fishing start at FAO. © 2008-2010. Small-scale fisheries - Web site. Small-scale fisheries around the world. In: FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department [online]. Rome. Accessed on 23 ay 2010] http://www.fao.org/fishery/ssf/world/en. Then follow up with FAO (2009). *Fisheries and Aquaculture report #911*. Rome, which offers a conspectus on the state of small-scale fisheries around the world.

[13] The family-based inshore cod-fishery that prevailed roughly between the 1790s

These fishing grounds were once the wealthiest and most productive in the world, intersected by the north-flowing warm Gulf Stream and the south-flowing cooler Labrador Current. Rich in microorganisms and minerals, these waters once supported such an abundance of marine life that only “in Newfoundland as nowhere else can one be made to feel the contrast between a land that is infinitely silent, motionless, poor in vegetation, above all poor in its variety of living creatures, and a sea which harbors every form of life.”[14]

Unlike herring and salmon, the cod has a high protein content without being fatty, so it was once called ‘the beef of the sea.’ As a lean fish, it is also relatively easier to salt cure and dry in the sun, which accounts for the centrality of cod to the Atlantic fish trade in the early modern period, between North America, Spain, and Portugal, among other countries. No wonder then that for half a millennium, salted and dried cod, variously called *bacalao* (Spanish), *bacalhau* (Portuguese), *klippfisk* (Norwegian), and *þorski* (Icelandic), has constituted the staple food in many a cuisine.

Codfish are carnivores. As fry, they feed on plankton near the water's surface, graduating as they grow to eat small crustaceans, including mollusks, and then to bigger fish such as herring, capelin, and squid. Codfish favor salt waters and thrive in temperatures around fifty degrees Celsius, though warmer waters are noted to speed up their hatching and re-

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and 1930s was partly a reflex of merchant capitalism as argued persuasively in Gerald Sider. (2003). Between history and tomorrow: making and breaking everyday life in Newfoundland. 2nd edition (Ontario: Broadview Press). In the centuries before the nineteenth, there were few ‘planters’ or settlers on the maritime coast. Most fishermen, hired as servants for wages, were brought over from Spain, Portugal, France, and England to work on the North Atlantic fisheries between the melting ice of Spring and encroaching fog and sea storms of Fall made perilous the transatlantic passage.

[14] Robert Perret, *La Geographie de Terre-Nueve*, (Paris, 1913, p.172) quoted in Innis, Harold.(1954). *The Cod Fisheries: the history of an international economy*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), p.2-3. A fuller account of the modes and manner of cod fishing off the Grand Banks can be read in Kurlansky, Mark. (1999). *Cod: a biography of a fish that changed the world*. (London, Vintage).

productive cycles. Location, climatic conditions, and the salinity and warmth of the seas largely determine codfish's spawning, growing, and reproductive cycles. Cod at the Gulf of Maine spawn in winter, while those at the Gulf of St. Lawrence spawn in summer; shore cod of Newfoundland reach adulthood in about two years, whereas bank cod take about four years to mature. Though codfish average about two feet and some six pounds in the Grand Banks, they vary in length and weight, with one of the largest caught off the Labrador coast recorded at over five feet long and over one hundred pounds.[15]

Governed by their breeding and feeding cycles, hunting for cod was circumscribed by the times and seasons during which codfish were available. Typically, the inshore fishing season was limited to roughly six to eight weeks when “the codfish bounding above the waves and reflecting the light of the moon from their silvery surface” chased in from the banks, their primary food source. This capelin was “hurrying away in immense shoals to seek refuge on the shore”.[16] Fishing relied on a baited hook on a single line dropped over the side of a small rowboat called a dory. Though larger boats were used seasonally to reach the offshore fishing banks, hunting cod with baited hooks implied the cod were hungry to go for the bait. Once cod gorged on capelin, they would stop biting at the baited hooks, and the cod fishery would end. Well into the twentieth century, when the fish were out at sea, fishermen would repair boats and houses and find other ways to exist, including garden farms of potatoes and turnips, livestock such as pigs, goats, and chicken, and the occasional caribou hunt during winter.[17]

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[15] See Innis, Ibid.

[16] Anspach, Lewis.(1989). *A history of Newfoundland*. (London), quoted in Sider, Ibid. p.72.

[17] Cadigan, Sean.(1999) The Moral Economy of the Commons: Ecology and Equity

Algebraic Machines, I: finance capital

By the middle of the eighteenth century, the cod fisheries off the Grand Banks were well woven into trade routes connecting Europe, Africa, North America, and the Caribbean.[18] Fish, rum, enslaved people, and manufactured goods were exchanged according to variable equations, and merchant capitalists from England and other European countries financed many Newfoundland cod fisheries. For most of the nineteenth and twentieth century, the political economy of the cod fisheries is best characterized as merchant capitalism. Through the store, the merchant sold fishermen such necessities as fishing supplies, building materials, and foodstuffs, including tea, flour, salt, pork, and lamp oil. However, they did so mostly on credit instead of for cash. The sale of goods from merchants to fishermen from roughly the beginning of spring through the fishing season raised a legally enforceable claim against the total catch of the fisherman in the fall. Called the "truck" system, this circulation of goods for codfish, mainly in the absence of cash, meant merchants imputed prices for both sides of the trade.[19] The custom of borrowing money in the form of goods and repaying such credit in codfish meant the logic of capital and interest was inserted into the fiber of the relation between fisherman and merchant. Though fishing families controlled the modes of producing salt cod, the value of goods received and cod given was recorded and calibrated in the merchants' books of accounts. Should the value of cod exceed that of the goods delivered on credit, the merchant

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in the Newfoundland Cod Fishery, 1815-1855. *Labour/Le Travail*. 43(Spring):9-42; documents the activities of fishermen and their families unrelated to fishing by which they deepened their competency to be independent of fish merchants.

[18] Morgan, Kenneth.(1993). *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade in the 18th century.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

[19] Sider (2003), Ibid, pp.25-29, and 79-83.

would balance the books by giving a winter supply of goods. Should the fisherman have received more goods than he paid in cod, he was carried on the books to the following year.[20]

Crucially, the length of the fishing season and the quantity of codfish caught in a given season would naturally fluctuate from year to year. This implied inevitable mismatches between the predictability of loan repayment schedules and the variability in the comings and goings of the codfish. For many reasons, not least of which was the increasing scale of the merchant's operations, the mismatch became increasingly unprofitable for the merchant capitalist, who demanded a more reliable and increased flow of codfish to match the growing credit outstanding. The customary practice of carrying forward loans or forgiving debts on account of unexpected changes in catch volumes reflected the subordination of finance capital to the exigencies of subsistence and the vagaries of nature. The dream of disciplining the natural ebbs and flows of codfish to the time value of credit money presupposed a reversal in this hierarchy of values. By making loan repayments a normal and normative demand, finance capital began to reshape the forms-of-life lived in concert with codfish.

Algebraic Machines, II: jiggers and more

In the mid-nineteenth century, fishermen could do little to change the rhythms of feeding, spawning, and migrating of codfish, as these were attuned to seasons, temperature, and other imponderables. However, they were tempted by and encouraged to the solution of increasing the catch. Specifically, in response to the demand for increasing the annual yield, fishermen began to experiment with and adopt more intensive technologies for fishing. Hence, after nearly 350 years of using the baited hook and line method, a slew of new instruments introduced in the latter half of the nineteenth century changed Newfoundland codfishing practice. All these technologies shared one crucial feature: they were designed to ignore the nature of codfish.

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[20] Sider, ibid., insists that the truck system always worked to the disadvantage of the fisherman, whereas Cadigan (1999) show evidence of merchants being paternalistic in carrying fishermen for many years, knowing full well that absent a winter supply' many would face destitution if not starvation.

The efforts to increase the catch through technical means relied on extending the fishing season in time and across space and increasing the quantity of the catch per unit effort. The cod jigger (two hooks attached to a lead weight emblazoned with the *image* of a capelin) and the cod seine were the first in this class of instruments. By design, the jigger was dropped into a school of satiated cod and rapidly moved up and down until one of the hooks pierced the flesh of codfish so it could be hauled aboard. With the jigger, cod could be captured after glutted full of capelin, lying logy on the bottom of the fishing grounds, refusing to bite at baited hooks. The cod seine, a roughly six-hundred-foot net composed of four to five-inch meshes towed by a crew of about six people, vastly increased labor productivity. Entire schools of codfish could be hauled aboard with the seine, catching young and old, spawning and mature cod alike.

The jigger and the seine encode the diagram of all industrialized fishing technologies aimed at increasing the catch size: the disregard for the nature of codfish and the disdain for the agonistic craft of hunting fish. Designed to catch fish whether they were hungry or not, the jigger and seine staged codfish as biomass. Reciprocally, such technologies of fishing also entailed transforming the activity of fishing from hunting to harvesting and recasting fishermen into the form of abstract labor. A related fishing tool was the longline or bultow, which comprised a long central line attached to dozens of fishing lines and hooks dropped to various depths and kept afloat with glass buoys on either end. Whether the jigger, the longline or traps, seines, and gillnets, the new technologies introduced during the second half of the nineteenth century transformed the activity of hunting codfish into the passive harvesting of a natural resource measured as fishy biomass.

Yet it was only with the deployment of the first bottom dragger in 1954 that natural thresholds associated with the cod fishery were wholly transcended. Though long lines today run hundreds of miles and have thousands of hooks at depths exceeding two thousand feet, it is the factory freezer dragger, trawling the ocean beds without regard for weather conditions, the hunger of cod, or other natural phenomena, which allows cod fishing to be temporally and spatially unbounded. The British built the first trawler or dragger in 1954 –the Fairtry- and that design was soon copied and elaborated by the Russians, the French, the Japanese, and the Spanish. The Fairtry was over 280 feet in length, lay at 2600 pounds of gross tonnage, and had onboard a freezer, filleting, and fishmeal machines. From harvesting to making the codfish market-ready, all the processes could be conducted on board, and Fairtry was able to fill her hold with 600 tons of fish in 40 days.[21] The steady intensification in the industrialization of fishing technologies has had the desired consequence of increasing the catch. Of the 100 million tons of cod estimated to have been captured from 1500-1992, it took 400 years to hunt down half of that number and less than a century to harvest the remaining 50 million tons.

Since the cod collapse in 1992, the idea of aquaculture cod has taken over the imagination of fisheries scientists, investors, and government agencies. Aquaculture not only entails programming the production of biomass but also the individual or corporate ownership of it.[22] In contrast to the older forms of 'capture fishery,' this new 'culture fishery' on fish farms aims to control the complete lifecycle of codfish from "egg to plate." Having failed to predict and control the behavior of codfish in the wild, the fish farm now expresses the controlled conditions of a scientific laboratory onto the waters. Fish farms are thought to solve the problem of wild cod by reengineering them as domesticated species.

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[21] Blake, Raymond.(1997). The international fishery off Canada's East Coast in the 20th century. In *How deep is the ocean: historical essays on Canada's Atlantic Fishery*, (eds). James Candow and Carol Corbin. (Sydney, Nova Scotia: Cape Breton University Press)., pp.208.

Algebraic Machines, III: modeling living fish

Fisheries science runs in tandem and is intertwined with the intensification of fishing technologies. For most of the history of the cod fishery, knowledge of the fish was limited to what fishermen knew. Therefore, inter-annual fluctuations in landings were accepted as the inevitable consequence of variable migration patterns, considered typical of all marine fish. Yet, by the 1850s, pressured by fish merchants to increase the catch size and by investors to smooth out fluctuations in the catch, governments began to recruit scientists to discover what caused inter-annual fluctuations in landings and to uncover the supposed 'natural laws' that determined years of lean and plenty.

In the 1880s, the German biologist Frederich Heincke combined the statistical methods he borrowed from studying human populations with observations of morphological features of herring that had been caught in different fishing locales. The first to self-consciously apply scientific methods to learning fish, Heincke insisted that population thinking could be fruitfully adapted to the fisheries.[23] Codfish could be considered a single species population whose measured birth and death rates would produce statistical estimates of harvestable cod. The notion of 'population' had so seeded the field of fisheries science that by the 1950s, population models predicted the amount of surplus biomass (or live weight of fish) produced each year by a specific fish population, labeled Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY), which if extracted would maintain stable annual landings.[24]

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[22] "Aquaculture is the culture of aquatic organisms, including fish, molluscs, crustaceans, and aquatic plants. Culture implies some form of intervention in the rearing process to enhance production, such as regular stocking, feeding, protection from predators, etc. Culture also implies individual or corporate ownership of the stock being cultivated," in *Federal Aquaculture Development Strategy*, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada. Accessed online on May 10, 2010 at http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/aquaculture/ref/FADS-SFDA-eng.htm#tphp.

The scientific conceit behind this prediction was that annual landings would remain perpetually stable if no more than the predicted surplus biomass were captured. While the surplus-production model allowed fisheries scientists to determine the maximum sustainable yield of fish populations, it did not account for technological innovations like the factory freezer trawler. Reality overtook that scientific model when for instance, at the peak of the Newfoundland cod fishery, trawlers from over 20 nations jostled for position on the offshore banks creating a "city of lights" on the fishing grounds. By 1968, this "cod rush" off Newfoundland resulted in a "killer spike" — the largest annual landings of cod ever recorded—and a steep decline in landings after that.[25]

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[23] "Pronounced aversion toward measurements and numbers...is admissible when it is a manner of gaining a quick overview about the manifold varieties of organic forms, and is pardonable when the pleasure of the composing artist in the beauty and variety of forms and in his (God's) fanciful conceptions is greater than the sense for exploration of the analytical scholar; but this aversion toward measurement and numbers, which at times is heightened into contempt, is incomprehensible, inadmissible, and unpardonable when the scholar demands that his labours be regarded as a contribution to the knowledge of the true laws of nature. – F. Heincke, 1898 in Sinclair, M., and P. Soleman. "The Development of 'Population Thinking' in Fisheries Biology between 1878-1930." *Aquatic Living Resources* 1 (1988): 189-213. p.195.

[24] The history of the MSY construct and its political versus scientific virtues in particular for the cold war era United States are detailed in Carmel Finley, "A Political History of Maximum Sustained Yield, 1945-1955," in *Oceans Past: Management insights from the history of marine animal populations*, ed. David Starkey, Paol Holm, and Michaela Barnard (London: Earthscan, 2008), 189-214; and Smith, T. 1994. *Scaling Fisheries: The science of measuring the effects of fishing, 1855-1955*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

By reframing this decline as a "tragedy of the commons," economists joined biologists to widen the scope of fisheries science. While the surplus-production model allowed fisheries scientists to determine the maximum sustainable yield from fish populations, there was no way to guarantee that fishermen would behave in accord. Economists claiming to understand and model human behavior then proposed bio-economic models as the appropriate scientific response to the failure of the prior population model[26]. By including the demand side of the equation, economists claimed to offer a more robust prediction of the equilibrium quantity of landings. They further proposed limiting the access to fish populations by enclosing the oceans within defined national boundaries. Creating public property of about two hundred miles of ocean excluded foreign fleets and gave legal teeth to quota restrictions imposed on domestic fishermen.[27] Within these constraints, rational fishermen could now maximize their profits while minimizing the dangers of overfishing. Total Allowable Catch (TAC) and Maximum Economic Yield (MEY) were the resulting new and improved scientific numbers that now fell out of the system of equations developed to optimize the joint behavior of codfish and the fishing industry.

From its inception in the population model, fisheries science was built on the assumption that living beings can be described in the logic of mathematics and experiments. MSY and TAC were the glue precipitated from scientific models of fish and fishermen that bound together industrialists, regulators, fishermen, fishing technologies, and fish. By harnessing outsized technologies and profit-seeking capitalists to such numbers and giving the supervisory reins to government regulators and scientists, it was believed that no more than the surplus biomass of cod would be harvested. Thus, on the eve of its collapse, the cod fisheries off the Grand Banks were widely acknowledged as the world's most scientifically advanced, best-funded fisheries management regime.

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[25] Finlayson, A. (1994) *Fishing for Truth: A Sociological Analysis of Northern Cod Stock Assessments from 1977-1990*. (St. Johns: ISER Books).

[26] Gordon, H.S. (1953). An Economic Approach to the Optimum Utilization of Fishery Resources. *Journal of the Fisheries Research Board of Canada*. 10:442-57 is an exemplary instance of bio-economic models of fish and fisherman.

[27] Sinclair, P. (1988). The State Encloses the Commons: Fisheries Management from the 200-Mile Limit to Factory Freezer Trawlers. In. *A Question of Survival: The Fisheries and Newfoundland Society*. Eds. P. Sinclair. (St. Johns: ISER Press)

And yet, in 1992, the cod fisheries off the Grand Banks collapsed, apparently forever. It triggered the largest single-day layoff in Canadian history, ending the many forms-of-life shaped by cod for nearly half a millennium. Induced by unemployment and relocation programs, the fishing families of Newfoundland were broken up and dispersed across Canada as far as the tar sands of Alberta in search of food and shelter. Others were encouraged to seek remarkably ineffective retraining programs. For instance, of some 40,000 persons receiving such assistance between 1994 and 1996, only "732 people were placed in jobs outside the fishery, 1,492 retired from the fishery, and 3,900 got jobs in non-groundfish fish plants."[28]

In the wake of the collapse, the assumptions of bio-economic population models have come under attack. Increasingly, fisheries science has become informed by the presuppositions of complex systems theory, which theoretically falsify many of the equilibrium and averaging assumptions of bio-economic models. Complex systems such as road traffic and stock markets operate in nonlinear ways, and wild cod are assumed to behave similarly. However, since ecosystem models with accurate predictive ability have not yet become available (and some scientists argue they are theoretically impossible given the uncertainty and complexity of perturbed marine systems), bio-economic models remain the dominant scientific way of understanding wild cod, though they are used with increased caution and ironic recognition of their unreliability.[29]

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[28] Sider (2003), ibid, p.33. See also pp.29-35 for the socio-political consequences of the collapse of the cod fisheries off the Grand Banks. For a moving historical account of the transformation of the cod fisheries from abundance to scarcity see, Chapter 3 of Nicholls, Steve.(2009). *Paradise Found: Nature in America at the time of Discovery*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press). Also consult, Bavington, Dean.(2010). *Managed Annihilation: An Unnatural History of the Newfoundland Cod Collapse*. (Vancouver: UBC Press), p.1-2

Reviving Fishy Biomass

Since 1992, all attempts to respond to the collapse of the cod fisheries have relied on applying further doses of techno-science to maintain the profits from the production and sale of codfish. The 'money value' of time, the 'biomass' of fish, and the 'population' of cod are abstractions that continue to be produced in the crucible of algebraic machines. Once, finance capital provoked technical innovations in the cod fisheries by making plausible a correspondence between the calculated flows in the value of time and the volume and constancy of fish landings. So provoked, fishing technologists continually sought to increase the catch by expanding the scale of operations. Exemplified by the jigger and culminating in the factory freezer trawlers, technical advancements in fishing entailed staging codfish as biomass, fishermen as instances of abstract labor power, and fishing as work. The potential for large-scale technologies to destroy what they set out to harvest also sparked the birth of fisheries science in the late nineteenth century. Increasingly refined scientific models of codfish and fishermen's behavior took for granted what technique had made possible and offered precise calculations of the harvestable biomass. Despite their evident failure, that once ruinous alliance between economics, technology, and science continues.

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[29] For the intrinsic vagueness of system-theory constructs in the fisheries and the likely lack of its operationalizations, see Garcia, S.M.; Zerbi, A.; Aliaume, C.; Do Chi, T. and Lasserre, G. 2003. The Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries: Issues, terminology, principles, institutional foundations, implementation and outlook. *FAO Fisheries Technical Paper*. No. 443. FAO: Rome. To locate the position of eco-systems models on the vector of scientific models of the cod fisheries, consult, Caddy, J. (1999). Fisheries Management in the Twenty-First Century: Will new paradigms apply? Reviews in *Fish Biology and Fisheries*. 9:1-43; and Caddy, J. and Cochrane, K. (2001). A Review of Fisheries Management Past, Present and Some Future Perspectives for the Third Millennium. *Oceans and Coastal Management*. 44:653-682.

For instance, the disappearance of wild codfish has been interpreted as an occasion to profit from raising codfish on fish farms. In this effort to create a cod aquaculture industry, scientists and entrepreneurs—leveraging university-based research and enabled by policies from provincial and federal Canadian governments—are beginning to domesticate cod populations over their entire lifecycle. Cod are grown in hatcheries and brood stocks developed through a cod genome project that has identified genetic traits consistent with rapid growth and large sizes suitable to maximize profits. Investments in techno-scientific inputs increase the resistance of such fishy biomass to diseases and stresses produced by being confined in sea cages, including cannibalism. Feeding cycles, water temperatures, and worker training programs aim to control the conditions for producing optimally profitable biomass. Thus, fish farms represent the effort to replicate the controlled conditions of a scientific laboratory on moving waters.[30]

Yet, the dream of total control is unattainable, though not for want of trying. For instance, the interaction effects between the domesticated biomass produced through the artificial selection of traits geared to market values and wild cod remain unclear, mainly since the coastal grow-out sites licensed to have farmed cod occur precisely where the remaining wild cod fish are to be found.[31] Fed on wild fish ground up as fishmeal, a pound of farmed cod indirectly absorbs between three and five pounds of wild fish. Thus, instead of preserving wild fish stocks, the aquaculture of cod depletes them.[32] Moreover, the industrial fish farms of the North beggars subsistence fishermen of the South since the fish meal is made of small pelagic fish such as sardines, anchovies, and herring that constitute the staple food of many fishing communities in the South. Thus, instead of feeding the world's population, aquaculture, the "beef of the sea," contributes to famishing it.[33] In a final irony, farmed codfish is packaged within the ideological system of ecological management. Yet, as realizations of controlled laboratories, fish farms potentially damage the environment. For instance, the waste from fish farms poisons the waters for miles, much like that from hog farms on the land. Similarly, the cod that escape from their confinement in sea cages can change the genetic composition of wild cod, making the latter less fit to survive in their natural environment.

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[30] The domestication of wild nature for global markets is aptly illustrated in Lockett, J. (2001)., "You cannot develop new markets without a consistent supply of product, and steady, predictable year-round production is the goal for every new species that is being brought into aquaculture. *It is a question of getting animals to spawn when you want them to rather than when nature dictates.* Scientists and industry are finding ways to alter the timing of these natural events to their advantage" in Aquaculture: what's on the menu? *Atlantic Business Magazine*, June/July:52-62; 56. (emphasis added)

Moreover, egg-to-plate farming is highly capitalized and industrialized, producing the well-known consequences of corporate concentration. For example, to compete with low-cost producers such as China, and other white fish products such as Tilapia, cod farmed off the Grand Banks is now branded as a high-end product following the success of marketing salmon. But the corporate organization of the Canadian salmon farming industry is instructive in this regard: the roughly 140 start-up operations that began to farm salmon in the 1980s are now reduced to a group of some 11 giant corporations characterized by global ownership, vertical integration of operations, and contract farming.[34] Unsurprisingly, the individual fish farmer will be left holding an increasingly small share of the overall sale value of cod, most of which is captured by corporate intermediaries.[35]

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[31] Ruzzante, D.; Wroblewski, J.; Taggart, C.; Smedbol, R.; Cook, D. and Goddard, S. (2000). Bay-Scale Population Structure in Coastal Atlantic Cod in Labrador and Newfoundland. *Canadian Journal of Fisheries Biology*. 56:431-47. Royal Society of Canada. (2001). *Elements of Precaution: Recommendations for the Regulation of Food Biotechnology in Canada*. An Expert Panel Report on the Future of Food Biotechnology. (Ottawa: The Royal Society of Canada)

[32] Naylor, R.; Goldberg, R.; Primaversa, J.; Kautsky, N.; Beveridge, M.; Clay, J.; Folke, K.; Lubchenco, J.; Mooney, H. and Troell, M. (2000). Effects of Aquaculture on World Fish Supplies. *Nature*. 405/6790:1017-24; and Pauly, D.; Tyedmers, P.; Froese, R. and Liu, L. Y. (2001). Fishing down and farming up the food web. *Conservation Biology in Practice*. 2(4):25.

[33] Belton, B. (2004). Ibid.

The Fisherman Knows Best

So why, despite their manifest failures, do the algebraic machines of capital and techno-science continue to be marshaled in the cod fisheries? In the light of the history of the cod fisheries, 'feeding the hungry,' 'technological efficiency,' 'conservation', and 'scientific knowledge' are no more than the shibboleths of managers, regulators, scientists, and capitalists. A recent newspaper article is exemplary in this regard.[36] Jeffrey Simpson, a well-known columnist for the Toronto *Globe and Mail*, inveighs against "irate fishermen," "the Fish Food and Allied Workers Union" and the "Provincial Fisheries Minister" for relying on "only anecdotal reports from fishermen" instead of on the scientific data produced by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and endorsed by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. In scolding these "local deniers and denigrators of (fisheries) science" for "discrediting the recommendations of the scientists," he complains: "So year after year, indeed decade after decade, we stare in the face of scientific data that say stocks are declining fast or improving only very, very slowly from decimated levels, yet the same voices remain in angry denial that more serious conservation action is required."

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[34] Conley, D. (1998). Environmental Concerns: The Anti-Salmon Farming Lobby in BC. *Aquaculture Magazine*. July/August:36-51., and Marshall, D. (2003). *Fishy Business: The Economics of Salmon Farming in B.C.* Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, BC Office: Vancouver, B.C. Accessed online on February 2, 2004 at: http://www.livingoceans.org/documents/fishy%20business.pdf.

[35] Lockwood, G. (1999). Who is Capturing Aquaculture's Values? *Aquaculture Magazine*. January/February:30-33

[36] Simpson, Jeffrey. (2010). Cod in Newfoundland: already seen that drama. *Toronto Globe and Mail*. May 13.

To forget it was precisely the most advanced fisheries science that purported to prove the abundance of codfish stock in the same year it became commercially extinct in the Grand Banks, the author reworks the familiar Enlightenment trope of the superiority of scientific knowledge against practical know-how. To argue against fishermen who say there are enough fish stocks for them to resume inshore fishing, he characteristically conflates coastal fishermen with labor on a factory freezer trawler, confuses fishing for cod with harvesting biomass, and confounds the quantity of cod needed for local trade and sustenance with the tons required to process in China and sell at Walmart.

Indeed, fishing communities have been the sites of dissension, debate, and protest since the introduction of the jigger, the seine, and the longline in the 1840s.[37] Without elaborating on the details, one can uncover the red thread that runs through the fabric of these objections. Starting with the jigger and for over a hundred years, fishermen protested using intensive fishing technologies because they disregarded both the codfish and the activity of fishing as such.

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[37] For a glimpse into the many attempts by fishing people to protest the introduction of threshold breaching fishing gears, see particular chapter 10 in Roberts, Callum. (2007). *The Unnatural History of the Sea* (London: The Island Press). For examples of such dissent and protest specific to the cod fisheries of Newfoundland and Labrador, consult the magisterial work of Innis, ibid. Cadigan, S. (1995). *Hope and Deception in Conception Bay: Merchant-settler relations in Newfoundland, 1785-1855*. (Toronto: University Of Toronto Press) details the vexed relationships between merchants and fishermen in these parts. Cadigan, Sean.(1999) The Moral Economy of the Commons: Ecology and Equity in the Newfoundland Cod Fishery, 1815-1855. *Labour/Le Travail*. 43(Spring):9-42; also describes the wrenching impact on native peoples of Europeans who settled the coast lines and highlights the arguments by fishermen against capital

Jiggers and seines increase output by indiscriminately killing and/or wounding codfish. Rooting their objections in the hunger of codfish going for bait, this argument against killing spawning or satiated cod applies *a fortiori* to later more intensive fishing technologies. Longlines and trawlers only build on the disregard for hungry codfish that jiggers and seines encode by design. These now scoop up hundreds of tons of biomass from the oceans yearly, regardless of species, age, and breeding cycle. What is not commercially valuable is thrown back, dead, as bycatch. Unmanned 'ghost nets' that have broken free from trawlers now roam the seas unceasingly netting fishy biomass that is destined to rot.

Their objection to the capitalization of the fishery is not only that expensive technologies necessarily introduce vast differences in income and wealth within their communities. But as important to their concerns is the transformation entailed by the technologization of fishing: when required to operate capital-intensive technologies instead of being able to use human-scaled tools, fishermen would be transmogrified into instances of abstract labor. According to state officials and capitalists, today's fisherman can be a coal digger tomorrow and an environmental engineer the next day. Fishing technologies that unmoor the fisherman from his tool thus transmute

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intensive and productivity enhancing technologies. For the repeated failures of techno-science in making up the cod fisheries, also consult by the same author, "Failed Proposals for Fisheries Management and Conservation in Newfoundland, 1855-1880." In. *Fishing Places, Fishing People*. Eds. D. Newell and R. Ommer. (University of Toronto Press: Toronto); and 2003, The Moral Economy of Retrenchment and Regeneration in the History of Rural Newfoundland. In. *Retrenchment and Regeneration in Rural Newfoundland*. Ed. R. Byron. (University of Toronto Press: Toronto).

him into a variable instance of abstract labor power.

Similarly, their objections to knowledges of a mathematical kind are rooted in the heterogeneity between such scientifically constructed objects as 'population,' 'biomass,' or 'maximum sustainable yield' and concepts borne of commonsense and practical reason. Scientific constructs erase commonly perceived distinctions and create imaginary worlds, for instance, one in which "ecosystem services provided by the coastline" becomes thinkable. This kind of scientific know-how remains a species of nonsense to the fisherman, whose knowledge remains tethered to his embodied craft.

At the heart of their protests is fishermen's recognition that fishing as a form-of-life can only be lived well within the natural thresholds defined by codfish's feeding and breeding habits and their own embodied capacities.[38] In this view, any kind of economic and techno-scientific rationalism that violate natural thresholds also subverts the nature of codfish and the culture of fishing. For them, the fisherman enters an agonistic relationship with his prey, and the fishing activity is bounded by the limits of his ability and its feeding and breeding habits. These dual natural thresholds demarcate the boundaries within which fishing occurs as a form-of-life. Beyond this place lies an undifferentiated space, which transmogrifies fisherman and codfish. The fish farm is now built in that nether world where generic biomass is farmed and harvested as cod, abstract labor seeking utility masquerade as fishermen, and fishing can mean operating a 6000-ton factory freezer trawler.[39]

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[38] Consult Agamben, Gorgio. (2000). "Form-of-Life" in *Means without Ends: Notes on Politics*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press) for the distinction between form-of-life and form of life. Summarily, form-of-life refers to "a life that cannot be separated from its form is a life for which what is at stake in its way of living is living itself" (p..4).

[39] The pivotal argument of this essay concerning natural thresholds is derived from Illich, Ivan.(1973). *Tools for Conviviality*. (Berkeley: Heyday Books). We also rely on this work for the implicit distinction herein between tools that can be 'used' and those

Today, the fisherman who hunts cod is a criminal under the law.[40] Hunting for codfish is criminalized because the hunter kills cod for largely non-commercial purposes. As such, he is a witness to a fading form-of-life that is either unthinkable or sentimentalized within the ambit of technoscientific and economic rationalism. In that sphere, fishing with a baited hook and line appears as naïvely romantic, cussedly Luddite, or as the willful stubbornness of 'deniers and denigrators' of science.

Holding Hands

The fisherman whose complaints gave voice to the codfish, whose practice embodies a lived relationship with it, is left mute and somewhat defenseless by the operations of such algebraic machines as finance capital and techno-science. The question of what is to be done still looms large, unanswered. Some in the spirit of ecosystem-based management have sought to extract fishermen's local knowledge to construct a more robust science.[41] Others have tried translating scientific percepts into common sense precepts through education and professionalization of the fisherman.[42] When

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that must be 'operated.' Also consult Illich, Ivan.(1985) *Shadow Work* (London: Marion Boyars) for elaborations of this concept articulated to 'science', and 'economy.' For the distinction between common sense and scientific rationality consult, Arendt. Hannah. (1993). "Conquest of nature and the stature of man," in *Between Past and Future*. (New York: Penguin Books) 265-280.

[40] To grasp the extent of the political repercussions resulting from the *de facto* criminalization of fishermen see CTV.(2003). *Grimes says ban on cod fishing dead wrong*." Accessed on Nov 13, 2004 at: http://montreal.ctv.ca/servlet/an/local/CTVNews/20030507/grimes_cod_nfld_030507?hub=OttawaHome

[41] Nicole, Power.(2000). "Women Processing Workers as Knowledgeable Resource Users: Connecting Gender, Local Knowledge, and Development in the Newfoundland Fishery." pp. 189-204 in *Finding Our Sea Legs: Linking Fishery People and Their Knowledge with Science and Management*, Eds. Barbara Neis and Lawrence F. Felt. (St. John's: ISER Books).

[42] For instance, "By allowing professional fish harvesters to] make their own business decisions and be accountable for the consequences ... [DFO hopes] to spawn

fishermen are not exploited as a source of knowledge for science or fashioned as professional managers, they are criminalized.

In this essay, we tried to raise a barrier against those algebraic machines that have and continue to reduce the forms-of-life of fishermen into a form of life. Our argument that finance capital and techno-science necessarily transmogrify cod into biomass, fishermen into abstract labor, and fishing into work aim to fortify a line of defense against the nexus of power/knowledge that devastates forms-of-life lived in concert with fish. Let us recall that the vast majority of fishermen and fishing communities of the world are oriented by subsistence and local trade. In the spirit of holding hands with those with whom we have little in common but to whom we are nevertheless committed, this essay tells fishermen nothing they don't already know.

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a new and positive fisheries management culture and usher in a new era of public-private sector co-operation in Canada's fisheries." Department of Fisheries and Oceans. (2001). *Atlantic Policy Review*. 26,49. For the state sponsored transformation of fish hunters into professional managers of biomass, also see, Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board Newfoundland and Labrador (PFHCBNL). 2004. *Frequently Asked Questions*. Accessed on October 12, 2004 at: http://www.pfhcb.com/.

Showing Us What is Possible*
A New Vision of Work from *Charpentiers Sans Frontières*
by Joshua A. Klein

Sometimes it feels impossible to imagine any other way of doing things until you see it done by someone else first – I had just one of those experiences this past summer. *Charpentiers Sans Frontières* (CSF), "Carpenters Without Borders," is a France-based timber-framing team that my colleague, Michael Updegraff, and I were introduced to in 2017. That September, our friend Will Lisak traveled to Romania with the group and wrote about their project.[1] CSF travels the world to restore medieval masterpieces such as Château d'Harcourt, Château de Gaillon, and a 1491 barn in Aclou. This group, founded and led by François Calame, an ethnologist in the Ministry of Culture in Normandy, gathers skilled carpenters from all over the world.

What impressed us so much about this group was that their work was done by hand. Although Mike and I take a hand-tool-only approach to our furniture making, it was hard to envision constructing entire frames without the aid of sawmills, circular saws, or chain mortisers. Of course, we all know it has been done that way for ages, but who in the 21st century would choose to do so? We were sure this must be an interesting group of people.

Through a serendipitous series of events, *Charpentiers Sans Frontières* spent 11 days at our place in Maine, hand-hewing, joining, and raising a 16' x 25' blacksmith shop

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[1] Will Lisak, "Carpentry Without Borders," *Mortise & Tenon Magazine*, Issue Four (2018), 96.

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Klein, J. Showing Us What is Possible: A New Vision of
Work from Charpentiers Sans Frontières.
Conspiratio, Fall 2022, p.146-171.

in August 2019. During that event, I got a firsthand view of the beauty of their work – work that is grounded in something more purposeful than economic expediency. I saw joyful, sweaty, skilled camaraderie that forged new relationships not only across borders but also with nature. This event brought back together those most basic and human elements of life (food, work, song, community) that should never have been separated in the first place – it was a constructive alternative to the division, rivalry, and greed that pulled societies apart. My life will never be the same after this event. If I had only one goal for this article, it would be to share the beauty of the engaged and passionate life that these carpenters exemplified – one in which the work of the heart is just as important as the work of the hands.

A New Perspective of What is Possible

The construction took place over eight days, and the frame was raised in one-half day. This build was an inspiring demonstration of understanding and skill. Moreover, another work is possible: Instead of working in isolation, dependent on machinery and manufactured building materials, we can claim our humanity by learning to use simple tools to create structures of lasting beauty. We can pick up a rusty axe that's already had two centuries of use, give it a fresh edge, and set it to work to accomplish incredible things. And because this way of building is an investment in labor rather than expensive machinery, it is something that *anyone* can do.

It's not necessary to fly to another country or host 40 carpenters. With nothing more than an axe, a chisel, and a saw, you can learn to shape your environment. Average folks throughout history did this kind of thing themselves – every farm had an axe or two for such projects. Even though professional carpenters have been around a long time, in the pre-industrial mindset, hewing logs into timbers was simply an unremarkable thing to do. It was the job you hired local kids to do with you.

The people I know building their lives with their two hands succeed by simplifying their obligations and doing things for themselves. It's amazing how much time and opportunity open up when we minimize the amount of stuff that we have to maintain and reduce the "necessary" expenses in our lives. Bill Coperthwaite built beautiful, simple yurts on his property in rural Maine and filled them with handmade things even though he "never had much money" and ended up "living all of his life well below what our government calls the poverty line." Bill made this possible because he made a "consistent choice of time over money" throughout his 55 years in his "experiment in living."[2] He succeeded because he refused to get sucked into the rat race.

The Carpenters Without Borders team has also shown us that physical work is even more fulfilling when done with friends and family. There's a lot of work to be done at a project like this that has little to do with an axe edge or timber. Sure, there's hewing and hauling, but there's cooking, feasting, laughing, and good stories to tell. CSF models the power of joyful handwork. Through their efforts, we've not only seen that many hands make light work (which is very true!), but also that the bonds built through sharing labor and sweating side-by-side prove to be the most rich and lasting.

Hewing

The teams set the logs on "bunks" to keep their axes out of the dirt while hewing. Putting the work up on these red pine offcuts gave the carpenters at least a foot of clearance to the ground and raised the work higher. Each log was secured by rolling with log dogs (essentially, big iron staples) on the opposite side of the face to be hewn. These log dogs were each unique in size and shape, being mostly blacksmith-made.

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[2] Peter Forbes, *A Man Apart: Bill Coperthwaite's Radical Experiment in Living* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2015), 192.

To lay out lines for hewing, the timber's cross-sectional dimensions were drawn onto both ends of the log, with their sides established plumb. The Americans typically used spirit levels, but some French carpenters used plumb bobs to establish these lines. Once the ends were drawn, they were connected down the length of the log with the snap of a chalk line, making a straight timber from the natural, irregular tree. In most cases, the carpenters peeled a strip of bark only where the lines would be snapped rather than peeling the entire log. This served two purposes: First, it saved labor because peeling bark in areas that were going to be hewn away would be wasted energy; and second, the bark provided a grip for standing on when working the log underfoot. Freshly peeled logs are slippery.

The lines were snapped carefully. Although the subtleties of using a chalk line are something I never really thought too much about, when snapping lines on irregular pieces (such as logs), it is critically important to lift the string exactly plumb so that it is in plane with the sides of the timber; otherwise the line will snap out of plane in low spots. To ensure that the taut line was plumb before letting it go, another carpenter would sight the line for them. "No, a little to the left. A little back. There." Snap! This way, a dead straight line could be achieved no matter the topography down the length of the tree. In addition to a trained eye, squares and levels were sometimes used to ensure the line was plumb before snapping.

ELLISON
TIMBERFRAMES

With the finished member marked out, all left was to remove everything that wasn't the timber.

This was accomplished in three steps: scoring/notching, joggling, and hewing. The first step is providing cross-grain stop cuts via regular kerfing with the two-person cross-cut saw or by notching with the axe down the length of the log. The waste areas between the notches are then "joggled" off the log by swinging a long-handled felling axe parallel to the tree's fibers. Ideally, this coarse stage leaves no more than 1/2" of material to remove with the hewing axe (the axe equivalent of the smoothing plane).

This joggling process is a bit awkward to get used to because it is often done while standing on top of the log, swinging a long-handled felling axe beneath your feet. Maintaining your balance while guiding a 4"-wide bit on a 36"-long handle at the end of your fully extended arms requires considerable skill. There is no instruction book or how-to guide that can give secret tips that will enable you to bypass years of practice. This work is about your brain and hands getting to know that tool.

In *The Glass Cage: Automation and Us*, author Nicholas Carr discusses a fascinating area of neuroscience research called "embodied cognition." He explains that scientists have found that the "workings [of the brain and body] are interwoven far beyond what we assume. The biological processes that constitute 'thinking' emerge not just from neural computations in the skull but actions and sensory perceptions of the entire body." He gives the retina as one example and says it "isn't a passive sensor sending raw data to the brain, as was once assumed; it actively shapes what we see. The eye has smarts of its own."[3]

The idea that our understanding of our surroundings

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[3] Nicholas Carr, *The Glass Cage: Automation and Us* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2014), 149-150.

is formed not only in our brains but throughout our whole bodies is consequential to our relationship with our tools. Carr explains that "our bodies and brains are quick to bring tools and other artifacts into our thought processes – to treat things, neurologically, as parts of our selves. If you walk with a cane, work with a hammer, or fight with a sword, your brain will incorporate the tools into its neuronal map of your body."[4]

Carr tells us that through disciplined practice, our brains begin to think of hand-held tools – such as saws, planes, or axes – as if they *are* an extension of our arms. This also might shed scientific light on a phenomenon that many woodworkers may have thought too subjective and emotional to repeat within earshot of the more cynical among us: the idea that using hand tools make us feel a closer "connection" to the material we work. Based on the findings of these scientists, that might be true.

When it comes to my tools, I've long believed that their unrefined and faceted handles help me to better engage my work. Every little idiosyncrasy gives my brain a positive reference for orientation and cutting angle. When using tools with round, smooth handles, I am completely dependent on visual confirmation to use them accurately. This limitation introduces an element of doubt into the workflow and can slow things down – exactly the kind of experience a working craftsman wants to avoid.

At the CSF project in Maine, the carpenters' hewing abilities were even more impressive than their joggling – they split the line with their axes all day long as if it was nothing. It was clear that they had spent many hours with these tools, and each axe's handmade uniqueness strengthened the connection between artisan and tool. The axes on-site were highly individual and varied tremendously from tradition to tradition, but most were French, American, Swedish, or German.

[4] Ibid., p.150

Many of the examples had a bevel on only one side. The idea with this style is that the "flat" back (actually slightly convex in both directions) guides the tool in creating a flat surface on the timber.

I wish I could tell you exactly how long it took to hew one 8" x 8" timber, but honestly, I was so astonished at how fast everything happened that the clock was an afterthought. Mike said he clocked Gustave Rémon hewing the single flat on a 14' rafter at about two minutes. Carpenter Loïc Desmonts calculated the average speed of hewing on this project to be 1.19m2/person-hour. This math means that from rough log to finished timber, an 8" x 8" x 12' post took around three hours to produce.

I have never seen anything more awe-inspiring than this team of people hewing the entire frame in a little over two days of labor. And, by all accounts, this was at a pretty casual pace. After the eight days of construction, several carpenters came up with independent estimates of the time they would need to build this frame with the same methods. The average bid was four person-months (640 hours) – two people for two months. This is the kind of efficiency that skill can achieve.

A Different Kind of Worksite

It was clear from the beginning that this was no conventional jobsite – no generator roar or shriek of a Skilsaw drowning out conversation. There was nothing here to be heard but the steady thumping of axes, the whisper of saws, and joyful laughter (with the occasional – and somehow fitting – exception of a jobsite speaker playing the Fugees, courtesy of Loïc). It was a rare moment in which there wasn't someone sharing knowledge or a story with others. It would be easy to mistake this project for reenactment olde-timey ways, but it was nothing of the sort. This week demonstrated convivial and sustainable manual work that is just as relevant in the 21st century as in the 12th.

It would have been something else entirely had we relied on the expediency of machines. This was made especially clear on the days throughout the week when the public came to watch. Folks of all ages were lined up at the edge of the worksite, standing in awe to see people using their hands to turn nature into culture. Grandparents, parents, and children alike were visibly moved by the scene. And in our conversations, I got the sense from some that although they thought they had come to watch burly carpenters manhandle massive logs, they discovered instead a display of respectful collaboration – of nature "manifest[ing] itself through the medium of human beings."[5]

On day three of our project, the carpenters were laying out joinery, and by day four, tenons emerged, and mortises were chopped. The layout was a focal point of this project because one of the primary objectives was to have the foreign crew learn the American square-rule method. This system relies on cutting shoulder reductions to a fixed depth, which accommodates the irregularities of hewn or rough-sawn surfaces. It's often described as envisioning the "ideal timber within." Because a hand-hewn or rough-sawn 8" x 8" post is potentially 1/4" smaller or larger at any point, a reference edge or line is designated, and shoulder reductions are cut to the "ideal timber" diameter of, say, 7". By making these reductions all the same depth from the reference, you know precisely the shoulder-to-shoulder measurement for the post's mating timbers. This system couldn't be more different than the French method of scribing the timbers to their mating members using plumb bobs.

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[5] Kageo Muraoka and Kichiemon Okamura, *Folk Arts and Crafts of Japan* (New York, Tokyo: Weatherill/Heibonisha, 1981), 123.

Joyful Engagement

If I had to describe the spirit of the crew during the construction in one word, it would be "joy." Everyone took their work seriously, but they also looked like they were having the time of their lives. So many said that even though they may be professional timber framers, they look forward to these yearly CSF vacations in which they are unfettered by the usual economic constraint of the bottom line. Many concurred with carpenter Will Gusakov's reflection that this was the type of work they *want* to do.

There is joy to be found in good work that is done well, but if we accept the contemporary paradigm that all physical work is inherently onerous, we tacitly affirm that withdrawal from this activity is desirable. We fill the void with an indiscriminate embrace of the commodities of convenience, forgetting that there is indeed something about manual labor, especially when done alongside others, that seems to fulfill our humanity. But it is easy to lose sight of this while living in a culture of comfort and detachment from the beautiful realities of raw, gritty life – such necessities as the tending of farm animals and construction of buildings.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's now-famous analysis of what he calls "flow" explains a direct relationship between our skill, the challenge we set before ourselves, and our happiness. A proper balance between skill and challenge must be maintained because if the challenge at hand exceeds our skill set by too much, discouragement sets in, or if our abilities far exceed what the task demands, we are afflicted with boredom. Both lead us to discontent. Csikszentmihalyi tells us that joy can be found in constantly pursuing higher skills that demand ever-higher challenges. Through this process of skillful engagement, we grow in competence and personal satisfaction.[6]

Learning to engage with the world through handcraft is one of the most powerful ways to cultivate joy in this life. Seeing the satisfaction blazoned across the faces of these carpenters couldn't have made this point clearer to me. Projects like this are a vivid reminder that "work is a good thing for man" and that it is possible to envision a future that embraces the benefits of modern technology without its dehumanizing tendencies. Let us never forget, in our pursuit of technological development, that the well-being of our humanity will be ignored only to our detriment.

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[6] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1990).

Sabotage

For many folks working on this timber frame project, the axe was and is the physical embodiment and symbol of these alternative possibilities available to us. The simple act of taking up tools is a trailhead to the path toward independence. With them, we wield the means to build the world we want to see. It is a small thing to learn to use an axe. But a life comprised of many such down-to-earth and constructive decisions is the framework for a new way of seeing the world – one rooted in empowerment, compassion, and freedom.

As one of the CSF carpenters, Florian Carpentier, put it, "[The axe is] one of the most basic tools since humanity [came into being]. And with just these few tools, some of them I am able to make myself, I can build comfortable, durable houses to shelter people. Many people are nowadays on a quest for meaning in their life. They don't see the point anymore in working so much, earning so much money, spending so much, and having so little time for family, friends, and themselves. You have the slow food movement; we are the slow construction movement. It's a provocation. It's like sabotage to the big machine. We show that we can go against the machine at our little level. But we have an impact. Even though it's small, we have an impact, and we must use it. It's not like I will save the world with my timber frames, but at least I do not destroy the world, which is already very good.

"Whatever you can do to make sabotage, you have to do it. [For my part,] I participate in creating good living conditions for people who will live in my houses. I contribute to maintaining the balance of nature and the ecosystem by using local trees, low technologies, and low-impact processes. This is meaningful because the important thing we need is not the machine, it's what I have in my hands: my skills. The human is put back in the central position in the process of building."

Beyond Borders

Having the deck in place on Wednesday morning enabled the carpenters to progress to the next step: scribing the curved braces into the bents. In turn, each team assembled their assigned bent horizontally on the deck, and the whole thing was leveled to establish a flat reference plane. The carpenters could then lay the curved braces on top of the bent in their positions and transfer the shoulders, relying on a plumb line instead of a square. Transferring layout like this is an ancient but effective method for dealing with the irregularities of hewn timber. Square-rule and scribing are two different ways to accomplish this, but squares depend more on regular material. Plumb bobs will always reference the center of the earth, no matter where they're hanging.

Hanging a plumb line from the upper face of a brace to the lower face of a post, any out-of-squareness is readily apparent on both members. Say the string touches the bottom corner of the post but is 1/4" away from the top corner. This 1/4" offset must be marked on the brace. Likewise, the irregularities of the brace must be marked on the post. Because both pieces are not perfectly square, if you want a tight joint, their shoulders cannot be perfectly square either. Using the plumb bob to transfer each timber's unique irregularities to its mating member, the correct shoulder can be sawn to fit perfectly.

Watching the French team teach the bemused Americans this foreign method was beautiful, the same way that the Americans taught square-rule to their foreign friends. There was some jovial banter throughout the week about the merits of one or the other system, but this kind of cultural sharing is exactly what CSF aims for. And who can deny that the world is more beautiful when people of different perspectives share their vision of life? I was moved to see how this crew uses these projects to cultivate that very thing. They aren't called Carpenters "Without Borders" for nothing.

And this connection across borders happened at mealtime, too, because the conviviality of sharing a meal creates an opportunity for meaningful conversation that might otherwise be left unexplored in the frenzy of contemporary life. It is a time to embrace, ponder, wonder, and deliberate together. The cooks, seated in the midst, are thanked and praised. A toast is made for more moments like these. Philosopher Albert Borgmann has put it, "In the preparation of a meal, we have enjoyed the simple tasks of washing leaves and cutting bread; we have felt the force and generosity of being served a good wine and homemade bread… In the simplicity of bread and wine, meat and vegetable, the world is gathered."[7]

This simplicity of communal eating is a profoundly human thing and, like swinging an axe with a friend, enriches our experience of life. It is available to us each day, if we will only make the time for it. Borgmann tells us that "it is within our power to clear a central space amid the clutter and distraction [of our lives]. We can begin with the simplicity of a meal that has a beginning, a middle, and an end and that breaks through the superficiality of convenience food in the simple steps of beginning with raw ingredients, preparing and transforming them, and bringing them to the table. In this way, we can again become freeholders of our culture."[8]

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[7] Albert Borgmann, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 200, 204.

The Raising

Saturday was the big raising day, and we invited the public to watch the momentous occasion. Will Gusakov started the morning meeting by calmly explaining the importance of safety and attentiveness. He laid out the raising plan so that everyone understood. The crew was intent and ready to go. But there were so many carpenters available to help that we all had to wait our turn – too many people on the deck would become dangerous.

The raising crew was divided into three teams: the lifting, the pike poles, and the ropes to restrain the bent from overextending. At Will's confident direction, the first bent was lifted off the deck and overhead, at which point the pike poles engaged the tie beam to continue the thrust upwards. Once the bent was vertical, Vermont framer Miles Jenness used the commander (which is essentially a massive mallet) to steer the posts' bottom tenons into their mortises. When the posts dropped, the assembly was secured with temporary diagonal bracing to remain plumb. Then the remaining two bents were assembled and raised.

The next step was to lift the log joists into place. These joists dropped into mortises in the tie beams, and the flat hewed on their top sides created a flat plane that was even with the tops of the tie beams to apply flooring.

The plates were lifted with ropes by a team above, a method called "parbuckling." By tying several ropes at the top of the frame and laying the timber across them, the team overhead could hoist the free ends of the ropes to raise the beam. Each plate calmly rolled its way up the wall without struggle or serious hang-up.

Right before lunch, the team began the first step of

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[8] Ibid., p.204

HOLLISTER
CALIFORNIA
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the roof assembly – raising the west gable post with its large curved braces. The final shape of the frame could almost be seen at this point. After a well-deserved midday feast, the entire team encircled the frame (whether they were actively on duty or not) to watch the building make it through to completion. The two remaining ridge posts were erected and braced, and the pentagonal ridge was set atop, in finicky coordination with its four diagonal braces beneath. After the ridge was set, the tenons of the half-round log rafters were slid into the ridge mortises and pegged, and the tails were lowered into the step laps cut in the plates.

The ritual driving of the final pegs and king post wedge were special moments to behold. For these last parts, we disassembled the rope barrier around the site and invited the public to share this moment with us. The CSF team saved the honors of driving these final pieces for François and those who helped with the food, housing, and other details. Their installation is ceremonial and afforded us a special opportunity for expressions of gratitude and appreciation.

That evening, a local fiddle band arrived to lead us in contra dances in the woodshop. There was a lot of sweaty stomping and hollering ‘round-and-‘round and up-and-down on that shop floor. We dosey-doed our partners for a long while until François asked to say a few words. He talked about the bonds we now share across the borders of our countries. He also explained that our axes are symbolic weapons of mass “construction” – the building of the frame being a monument to the building of our deep friendship and shared conviviality. Then he presented me with a restored 19th-century French hewing axe as a token of our friendship – a generous gift I will always cherish.

We look forward to using this axe to work side-by-side with others for many years.

What is Possible in Your Life?

In its scale and intensity, this project is likely beyond most people's needs – not everyone will host a team of French carpenters to build a blacksmith shop. There are no longer horse loggers in every community, not everyone owns a plot of harvestable trees, and the congestion of urban life may preclude large-scale hewing operations.

Everyone’s circumstances are unique, and there are constraints intrinsic to each. If you’ve chosen to maintain a stable career, it often means you’ve committed to a particular geographical place. The joys of raising a family only come through relinquishing the autonomy of the single life. We all make choices. We pursue the things important to us: job, leisure, comfort, or family. Life is always an exercise in creating space for things we want to see flourish and grow.

But there are many things that can become possible for us, if only we are willing to make hard decisions and step out into the hope of something different. To succeed, we must hold the value of reaching our goals above the discomfort or inconveniences we may experience along the way. Although we all find ourselves in different life circumstances in pursuit of a variety of aims, it is important to realize that our options are never limited solely to what the mainstream industrial economy has to offer; *Charpentiers Sans Frontières* has shown that something else is possible.

Making Conspiratio

by Isabelle Cedotti

The digital version of *Conspiratio* sprang from the desire to constitute, through texts, a group interested in studying of Illich's ideas. The printed version of *Conspiratio* also forms a group: of those who make it and those who will have a physical book in their hands to read.

I will tell you a few stories about the group that makes the printed version of *Conspiratio*.

In Brazil, my formation was mainly as part of a group of young artists who worked together. We were a group of art students and a teacher, the artist Ernesto Bonato.

Conjointly, we spent hours and days together. We saw the effort of drawing the human figure be transformed into lines, into volume, into the recognition of each other presences, into understanding… We saw the human figure take shape as shoulders, eyes, ears.

It was nothing like the search for hyperrealism shaded by construction tricks, which is quite common in face drawings today. Instead, it was a discovery of ways to be that *emerged* from *being* together and sharing the *act* of drawing and painting.

Our joint learning also took place amid those who came before us through our study of art history. We recognized fragments of what we were looking for in these works from other times, which became clearer through our artistic praxis. Although recurrent in history, it was up to us to rediscover the possibilities of *being* and *being* together through the artistic *praxis*. Such testimony happened through the practices of drawing, painting, and printmaking. And taught us about something that can be shared across time, space and not only among people face to face.

Isabelle Cedotti, isabellecedotti@gmail.com

Cedotti, I. Making Conspiratio.
Conspiratio, Fall 2022, p.172-199.

Ten years have passed since those encounters which began when I was 19 years old and in the first year of the Visual Arts program at UNICAMP (State University of Campinas).

In this year, 2022, that same teacher reintroduced me to the work of a generation of Brazilian artists who collectively carved a 1515 image by the German artist Albert Dürer. In this work of 2003, the original woodcut of the *Rhinoceros*, which was 24.8 x 31.7 cm, was enlarged to approximate the size of an actual animal of this species – the final image was 2.26 x 3 meters.

Divided into 15 plates, the large image was carved over the course of a year by eight different artists[1]. Each carved on her or his piece of the wood a segment of the full sized rhinoceros by enlarging the lines that were carved almost 500 years ago by Dürer. These artists, attentive to the movement of Dürer's carved lines, shared something with him through their gesture of cutting the wood. It was an intense encounter shared through *praxis*, even though separated by different moments in time.

After the wood carvings were finished, these plates generated, through printing, a series of reproductions of the large *Rhinoceros*. The artists spread these large, reproduced images across different cities thereby putting together a scattered art intervention.

Woodcut is a technique of image reproduction that was widely used in images that composed books at the beginning of the printing press. It was a way of reproducing a drawing, just as using wooden movable types was a technique to reproduce the written word. Woodblock prints can be made in a variety of ways. The principle of printing carries the principle of woodcut itself: when the wood is carved, gouges and incisions are created on its surface; later, the surface is inked. However, the incisions do not receive the ink layer, only the surface without gouges receives it. The paper is laid on the woodblock, receiving the

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[1] Artists: Ana Elisa Dias Baptista, Ernesto Bonato, Fabricio Lopez, Fernando Vilela, Flávio Castellan, Francisco José Maringelli, Luciano Ogura Buralli e Paulo Camillo Penna.

ink from the preserved surface, transferring the image from the plate to the paper. There are several ways to apply pressure on the back of the paper so that the ink is transferred from the wood into the paper. In manual printing, wooden spoons and barens are often used to place pressure on the back of the paper so the ink can be transferred from one surface to the other. In large-scale woodcuts, manual printing can be lengthy and requires close attention since the amount of pressure, once defined and consistently applied, determines the aspects of the image.

Several types of printing presses are alternatives to manual printing. Yet, it is common to resort to manu-

al printing when artists seek refinement in the amount and variation of applied pressure or when the woodcut plate is too big to fit the most usual printing presses (mostly adapted to serve the printing market of books, posters, and leaflets).

Due to the dimensions of the *Rhinoceros*, new printings require a kind of *mutirão*[2], a collective effort. As part of a new generation, I participated in the manual printing of

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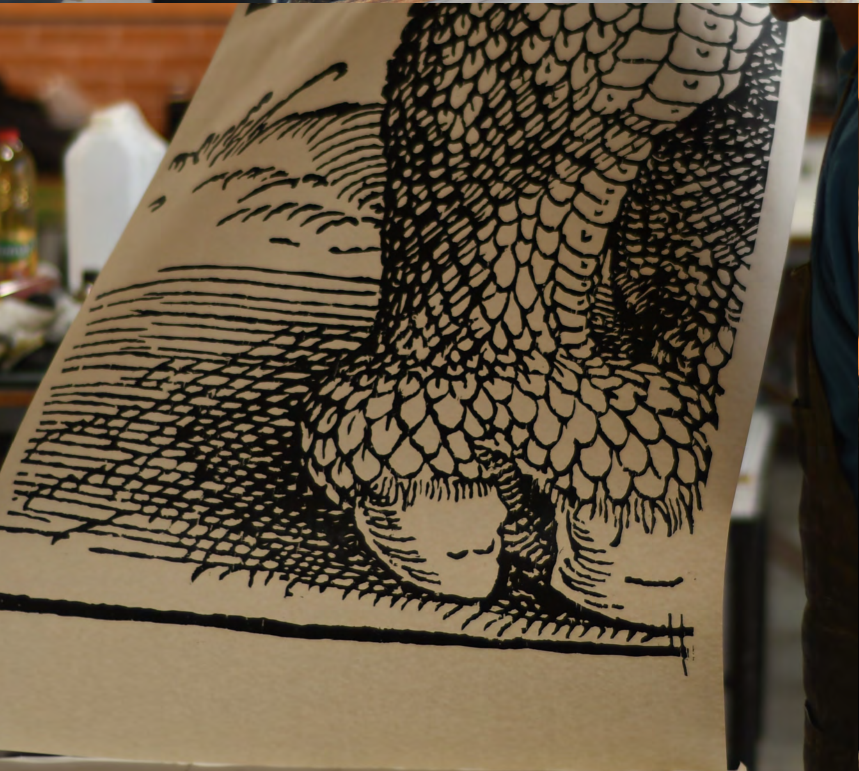
[2] Mutirão is a word used in Brazil to address a kind of collective mobilization based on mutual support. It takes place, for instance, when a group of people come together to help a neighbor building a house, to planting and harvesting seasons, to clean big common areas and to many other endeavors. Mutirão lightens the burden of heavy work through collective effort.

the plates which compose the image at two different times. My first *mutirão* happened in the first years of university. We worked during nights and after class time, when professors and staff had already gone to their homes and the Art Institute was silent and "officially" closed. On such nights, only our small group of printers and a few students from the music course, seen between the rehearsal rooms and the distant corridors, were present. The Institute was transformed on these occasions, it was like the unveiling of a new atmosphere for us. There we felt very close to each other, our laughter echoed throughout the corridors and resonated within the silence of the Institute, forming a rhythm between the moments of relaxation and concentration that the endeavor demanded.

It was in this year of 2022 that I was part of *mutirão* for a second time, with those wood plates that carry fragments of Dürer's now great *Rhinoceros*. This time, I lived in De Etser's art studio, a collective printmaking art studio in the city of São José dos Campos, Brazil. That feeling of working collectively into the night was very familiar from my university years but amplified at the art studio. The same teacher from 10 years ago invited me to live in a house, an open space in this complex for collective artistic work. Among printers, painters, a ceramist, bookbinders, educators, and people who research and build bamboo houses, we shared spaces and places, travelled the long distances on the little road to the city, lived together with some, and experienced the darkness of nights in those rural areas.



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At this collective, Cláudia Gütlich and Carmen Sapede run a bookbinding studio, which is located under the printmaking studio and next to the kitchen. On visits to the small atelier, leafing through and asking about the abundant work done by them, Conspiratio took shape. We jointly investigated different papers, formats, threads, stitching techniques, and researched assembly methods. Conversations about the region and our families interspersed our discussions like salt and spice in a dish. Now, we tested the possibilities of one type of paper compared to another, debated ideas on how to bind, and to put together these texts. Then, we shared recipes to heal colds and

discussed the difficulties bringing up children. My companion Neto and I, who were living there for a few weeks, had a reason, due to Conspiratio, to be at the book binding studio almost every day. The personal blended into the professional in this communal setting: questions about whether we were adapting well to the new house and to the cold nights of the region shaded into conversations about previous works. We listened and talked! On these occasions, and largely because of the growing curiosity surrounding Conspiratio, we talked a lot about Ivan Illich. During the soup and wine evenings, organized by the group that lives or frequents this place, we were invited to share

FORROCA
MAIS LIVROS
VIVA SUS
JACAREFUMETA
LINDO SHOW LIVRE
CONVIDA
CIENCIA
SUBACO-DA-COBRA
DELIRIO DUO
COMUNA
VACINA
COMIDA

Rua
Marielle Franco
(1979-2018) Vereadora, defensora dos Direitos Humanos e das minorias, covardemente assassinada no dia 14 de março de 2018.
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our journey with Ivan Illich's ideas. In this conversation, we agreed to expand the topics started there. By the time we got to the final format of *Conspiratio*, many afternoons had been spent in the small atelier and in the big kitchen. The design of Conspiratio would have to include two competing demands: to have its stitching exposed and to have a spine with title and date information. The solution was to design a slipcase. The reader holding *Conspiratio* may feel like the recipient of a letter from afar: removing the periodical from the slipcase is reminiscent of extracting a letter from an envelope.

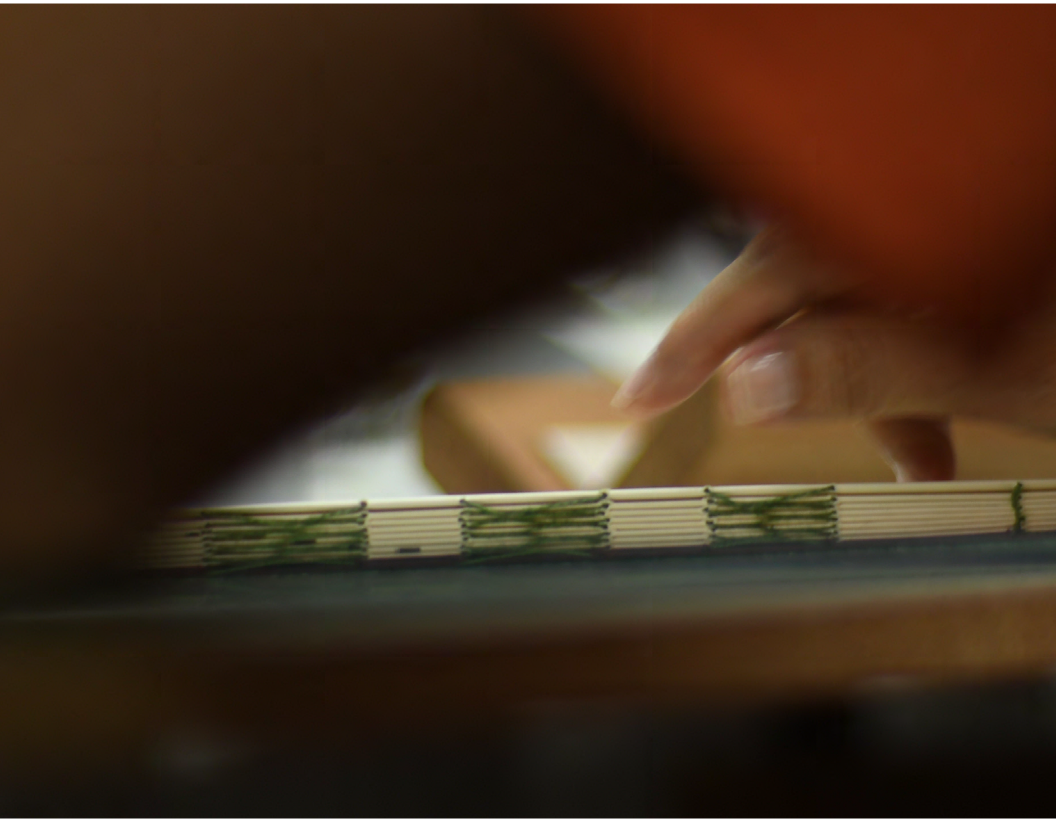
When we started to make volume 1 of *Conspiratio*,

we shared the required tasks, between folds, cuts, creases, gluing, holes, presses, stitching… and many other things that Cláudia and Carmen coordinated. Volume 1 of *Conspiratio* emerged from a ten-hands effort, and with the contribution of other friends, who were often there cooking, sharing their own work, and inspiring us with ideas.

This issue of *Conspiratio* carries on the cover of each volume a detail from the great *Rhinoceros*. Its printed images once united far flung corners of different cities. Today, when each reader extracts *Conspiratio* from its slipcase, she or he will confront a small portion of the rhino. Each volume of this issue

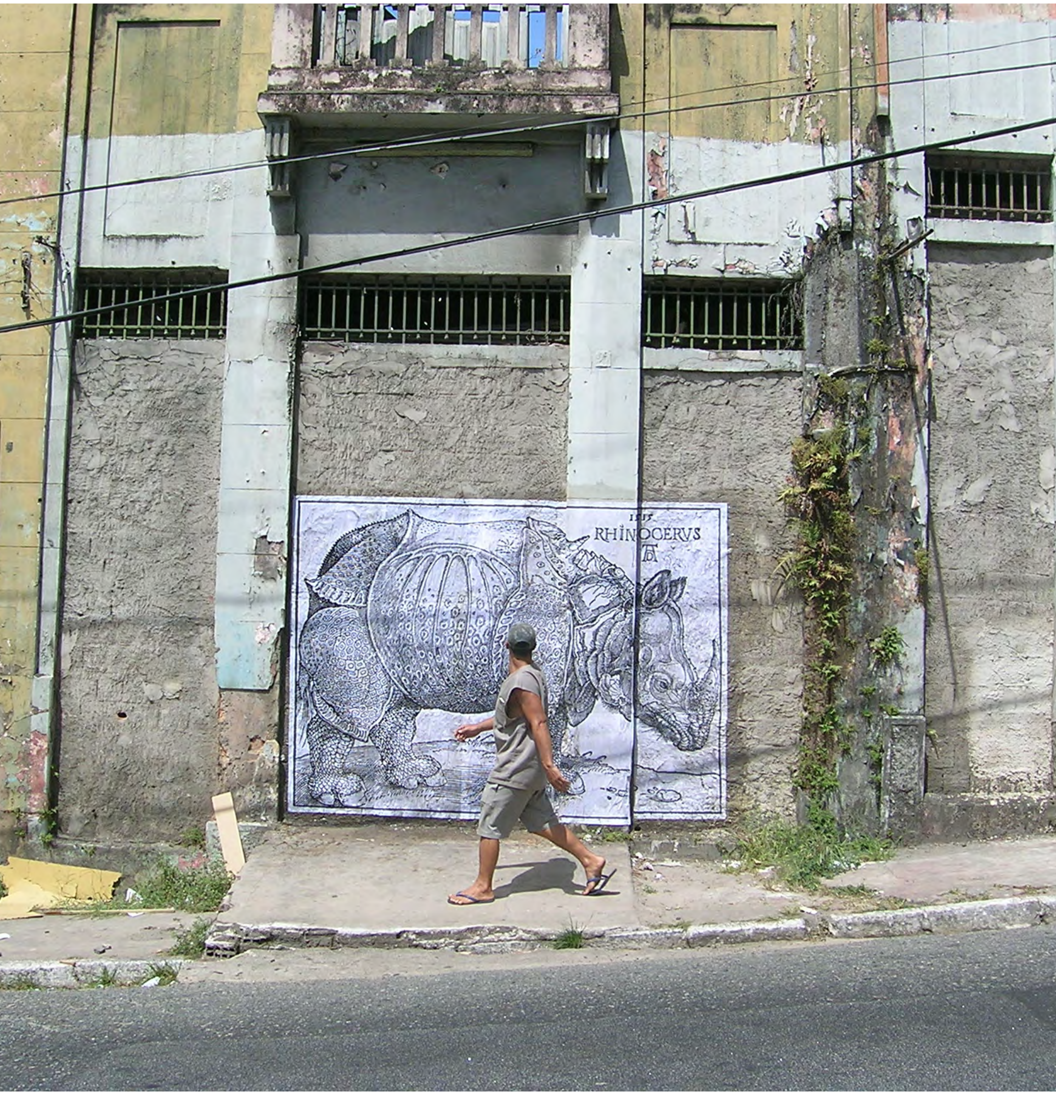
as it goes into the world to be held and read is joined to the collective that made it through the fragment on the cover. None can see the whole rhinoceros and yet, each feels part of that invisible whole.

The atmosphere of con-spirare, of breathing together, is given wing when work is born out of a shared place and time. Or, when time is born from shared spaces and work. Or when there is room for shared time and work. Between the time of the text and the stitching of the gathered pages, we hope to find a room open to the encounter.



Acknowledgments
I would like to thank the following artists for gathering me into this joint work: Ernesto Bonato, Marina Faria, Claudia Gutlich, George Gutlich, Carmen Sapede, Fábio Sapede, Neto Leão, Nalu Luzio, Luciana Renna, Luiz Chalita, Gabriela Oliveira, Simone Surreal, Mariana Ardito e Sergio Silva

The last two pictures (p.198,199) were taken in 2005 - Paraíba, Brazil. They belong to Ernesto Bonato's archive and were published here with his permission. All the other pictures were taken by Neto Leão in 2022 - De Etser Atelier, Brazil.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Reviews

The Land and the People are Indivisible: Wendell Berry on Patriotism and Prejudice

Review by David Cayley

Berry, Wendell. **The Need to Be Whole: Patriotism and the History of Prejudice**. *Shoemaker and Company, 2022, p.528*

In 1964 Wendell Berry abandoned the cosmopolitan life that might have been his as a "promising" writer and returned to his roots in rural Kentucky. At the time of this abrupt change of direction, he was living and teaching in New York City, having earlier been a Wallace Stegner fellow at Stanford University and then lived in Italy and France on a Guggenheim fellowship. The year after moving back to Kentucky he and his wife Tanya bought Lane's Landing Farm in Port Royal, not far from the Berry "home place" where his family had farmed for generations. He didn't stop writing – not at all as his large and still growing body of poems, stories, novels and essays will attest – but he did start farming, and he did resume his membership in the local community in which he had been born and raised.

Nearly thirty years later, when the series American Authors devoted a volume to Berry's literary achievement in 1991, his old teacher Wallace Stegner contributed a letter which noted that Berry had defied almost every rule which had governed the writing of American fiction in the twentieth century. The rules Stegner had in mind, among others, hold that estrangement is a more engrossing theme than belonging, the city a more vivid scene that the countryside, leisure a more interesting subject than work, and evil a richer topic than good. Berry has reversed all these rules. His subject in his novels and stories, and in many poems and essays as

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Cayley, D. The Land and the People are Indivisible:
Wendell Berry on Patriotism and Prejudice.
Conspiratio, Fall 2022, p.203-214.

well, has been the goodness of a vanished way of living and working in a tiny region of rural Kentucky. He has celebrated the art of farming as it was still practiced in his childhood in the 1940's and 1950's – Berry was born in 1934 – drawing attention to the balance that existed on the old mixed farms – between men's and women's work, between cash crops and subsistence, between cultivated and wild land, and between the many elements of the farm's internal economy. He has written of the extraordinary range of competencies that this way of life fostered, and of its arduous but unhurried pace in which there was still time for talk and for the flowering of individual characters. Given this subject matter, Stegner wrote, in his letter to Berry, "By every stereotypical rule of the 20th century, you should be dull." But Berry, as Wallace Stegner knew, and many other readers will attest, is far from dull. Indeed, I would say, speaking just for myself, that Berry's stories and novels have not only entertained me, but also heartened, nourished and strengthened me in a way that almost no other contemporary literature has, a way that has called me back, again and again, to places and people and stories already deeply familiar. Berry's characters and scenes exist in my mind *sub specie aeternitatis* – as if seen from the perspective of eternity – and deserve the name Northop Frye applies to romance, in its largest sense – a secular scripture.

Now, in his 88th year, Wendell Berry has produced what seems to me a crowning glory – a 500 page book called *The Need to Be Whole* in which he pleads with his divided compatriots for peace, understanding and mutual forgiveness. No one could be better placed than Berry to issue such a plea. On the one hand, he is a man who has written against racism – *The Hidden Wound* – opposed his country's foreign wars, and, with others, occupied the office of Kentucky's Governor in opposition to the depredations of the state's powerful coal industry. On the other, he has consistently spoken up for that rural America which is now the great reservoir of support for Donald Trump, and deplored the contempt in which its people are held by many of his erstwhile allies in peace, civil rights and environmental causes.

Berry's plea for wholeness rests on the idea that a land and its people are, or should be, indivisible. "The danger of dividing land and people into two thoughts," he says, is something that he has understood "more and more clearly" as he has gone on, but the idea was there from the start. From the time he returned home in 1964, he saw that if he was to be an advocate for this "endangered" place, it must be as an advocate for the people as much as for the place. He was, as he says, "a native" – his affection "unspecialized." He couldn't love the land and hate the people, as so many "environmentalists" seem to do. "So without quite knowing what I was doing," he writes of his early years back in Port Royal, "I had entered the way of love and taken up its work." As the word *work* suggests, he means nothing sentimental here by "the way of love." He speaks as Simone Weil speaks when she says that "faith is the experience that intelligence is enlightened by love." Berry writes, "…We know…things by means of love that we cannot otherwise know." And this means, he goes on, that "…we know in the fullest sense only what we love and… we love and know in the fullest sense only what we have imagined." It follows, he concludes, that change must "begin in the heart."

In 1977's *The Unsettling of America*, Wendell Berry denounced the depopulation of the American countryside, the industrialization of agriculture, and the tendency of urban America to become "a nation without a country." The divorce he then deplored between land and people, country and city, citizen and citizen has grown acutely worse in the forty-five years since that book appeared. "Oversimplification" and "exaggeration," he writes in the book under review, have increasingly replaced civil discourse. Caricatures have pushed aside full-dimensional persons, as people have "withdrawn into subcategories." And "language [has] overpower[ed] knowledge." "Public conversation about race and racism" is conducted, he says, "in terms highly generalized, unexamined, and trite: bare assertions and accusations, generalizations, stereotypes, labels, gestures, slogans and symbols." Victory and vindication count for more than clarity and understanding. "Public causes," he says, "become specialized in various movements" and, in being separated they are inevitably deprived of context and set into competition with one another – "each one a distraction from every other one." "Powerfully felt abstractions," without pertinence or sense, are deployed in futile wars of words, as people "angrily accuse one another of anger, and hatefully accuse one another of hate."

Berry's diagnosis is that there has come to be "a prejudice against community life itself" insofar as this means encountering, loving and suffering one another as situated and ensouled persons. More particularly, he thinks that the proper relationship between the general and the particular has been lost. "We must think of [general] terms," he contends, "as always in search of particular examples, just as a particular event or memory will go looking for the general sense or truth, if any, that it embodies." Without this constant resort to particulars, he says, there is no chance of ever solving the gigantic, aggregated problems that are made to loom over us in that simplified "public conversation" of which Berry speaks. When, for example, "white liberals" take on the symbolic burden of racism in its entirety – "systemic racism," as one now says – anything "so ordinarily human as friendship or neighborliness or help in solving a human problem" must necessarily be marginalized and trivialized – dwarfed by the need for "something public, large, symbolic and monumental."

One of the particulars that Berry thinks is being fatally lost is historical memory, and a substantial section of his book is devoted to the Civil War and its aftermath. Again Berry is well placed. His native Kentucky was what was called a border state during that war – a slave state that didn't secede from the Union in 1861. It maintained an officially neutral government throughout the war but also possessed a shadow "Convention of the People of Kentucky" that participated in the government of the Confederacy. In effect, Kentucky was at war with itself and bears the scars of that internal division to this day, Berry says. But that self-division is just one figure for Berry of the complex reality that the Civil War reflected and bequeathed to the United States of today. A paradigmatic figure for him in this regard is Robert E. Lee, who commanded the Confederate armies. Lee held contradictory views on race. He freed slaves that he personally owned and denounced slavery as a "moral and political evil" in private correspondence, but he never opposed the institution publicly and was certainly a racist who opposed voting rights for blacks after the war, holding that they would not vote "intelligently." He was offered a high command in the Union army and opposed secession, but, when secession came, and invasion of his native Virginia was imminent, he chose to fight for the Confederacy. "I cannot raise my hand against my birthplace, my home, my children," he said. For Berry, "he embodied and suffered, as did no other prominent person of his time, the division between nation and country, nationalism and patriotism that some of us in rural America are feeling at present." Nation and nationalism, in Berry's usage, refer to an abstract allegiance, while country and patriotism describe a vital and demanding relationship – to a place to which we belong as much as it belongs to us. Lee, limited and even culpable as he may have been, was a man grown in such a place, and he put his obligation to it above any other claim. When the terrible war ended at last, he preached and practiced reconciliation between North and South, but, while the war continued, he fought. This makes him, for Berry, a tragic figure, a man caught in a web not of his weaving, who was guided by "loyalties that he selflessly respected and intimately felt rather than by general principles telling him what he ought to feel."

In 2017 a decision by the Charlottesville, Virginia City Council to remove an equestrian statue of Lee from a city park led to a pitched battle in the streets of the city. It became one of the defining events of the first year of the Trump presidency, when the President spoke equivocally about the pro-statue protestors rather than unconditionally condemning them. The statue was finally taken down in 2001. Berry regards such actions as an attempt to "kill the past" and render it "obsolete." This is dangerous, in his view, on several grounds. First it removes from sight and mind a living history which still informs the present and which ought to be faced and discussed rather than purged. Second it shows contempt for local loyalties and affections – the Confederate soldier toppled from his pedestal is not just an incarnate abstraction, but somebody's brother or son, friend or lover. And, finally, the statue topplers perpetuate the very war that they ostensibly want to end. The forces of righteousness "refuse…to imagine…the humanity and suffering of an 'enemy,'" Berry writes, "and, to me, this is the most troubling revelation of the movement against monuments… for such a principled numbness foretells only more killing."

Berry's book is rooted, as all his work has been since he entered on "the way of love," in a spirit of forgiveness. He takes the commandment to "love your enemies" seriously – though, I reiterate, unsentimentally – and he finds "an imperishable absurdity in the idea of war as a means of peace." Among the virtues that he thinks best support a spirit of forgiveness he includes a sense of humour – that "wise and generous laughter that is meant to wedge or wear a breath of space between our ourselves and our opinions" – and a sense of humility rooted in a recognition of the fragility and evanescence of goodness – "We must bear in mind," he dares to say "that the language of division is more perfectible than the language of agreement – for the reason that, for humans, evil is simpler hence more perfectible than goodness and truth." The inevitable incompleteness of our knowledge provides yet another motive for a forbearing attitude. This is an old theme of Berry's, wonderfully developed a few years back, in an essay called "The Way of Ignorance." "…it is the unknowable, not the knowable and the known," he says here, "that ought to set the tone of our conversation about the past."

One of the most surprising, and, for me, most inspired elements of *The Need to Be Whole* is the amount of attention Berry gives to the idea of sin. It's a word rarely heard these days outside of theological circles, embarrassing even to most Christians, and yet Berry devotes a whole chapter to it. I have the impression that for most people sin is closely connected to guilt and is therefore regarded as a fetter on that glowing self-esteem that should be proper to a contemporary person. There is a good reason for this aversion to the idea. During the Middle Ages sin was "criminalized" by the Church. It was turned from a ground for contrition and mutual forbearance into a juridical and actionable fault within the Church's emerging legal order. Worse, it became a means by which the Church shamed and controlled its flock. Not surprisingly, people eventually rebelled against this oppression but, in the process, the baby went out with the bath water, and people were left with no concept at all to account for their inevitable short-comings. This has resulted, in Berry's opinion, in a thin and weakened morality. Not only is "our incompleteness and brokenness as a public culture" revealed by "our self-comfortably small selection of public sins," but "the issues of our merely public morality are incomplete, scattered, arbitrary and discontinuous." (His *we* here refers to Americans, but

Canadians, I think, share this vitiated morality.) With only "a meagre handful of highly specialized sins, he says, "an unprecedented multitude [can] be sinless." Getting down to cases about these "specialized sins," he writes…

> A properly educated conservative who has neither approved of abortion nor supported a tax or a regulation, can destroy a mountaintop [mountaintop removal is a method of coal mining in Kentucky] or poison a river and sleep like a baby. A well-instructed liberal who has behaved with the prescribed delicacy towards women and people of colour can consent to the plunder of the land and people of rural America and sleep like a conservative.

Neither trembles at their own sinfulness, and self-righteousness rules the field across the political spectrum. The complacently *woke* see no need to discover a country "filled only with Trump voters, disbelievers in science, climate change deniers, racists, sexists, homophobes, [and] backward 'non-college' country people." Those so vilified and patronized make equivalent caricatures of the "liberal elites" and become angrier and more defiant, as they are driven deeper into the character ascribed to them. Where there should be conversation, there is instead "a rhythm of retribution passing back and forth between two hostile sides."

I am only able to give a bare idea of this rich book in a short review, but one other feature that deserves note is the dialogue the book carries on with various black writers. One example is the work of his contemporary Ernest Gaines (1933-2019), with whom he maintained a lifelong friendship which began when they were both Stegner fellows at Stanford in 1958-1959. What Berry commends in Gaines' work is a "language [that] locates him particularly and exactly in his native place and its history." He continues…

> Ernest Gaines speaks so fully and responsibly of what he knows that in speaking for himself he speaks also for others. His language…is so attentive to the details and qualities of lived lives, and so mindful of itself, that it displaces us from the loaded abstractions and slogans of public confrontation and returns us to the lovely possibility that people can talk *with* one another. No language could be…more determinedly unavailable to the purposes of hatred and violence than that of this book or this writer. [Gaines' *A Gathering of Old Men*, set in Louisiana, is the book under discussion.] Because he speaks of and from his own small place, which, as he knows, is only one in a mosaic of thousands of small places, the South cannot be for him an abstract idea as it is for many less settled and located people. Having so particularly placed himself, he cannot speak as a representative southerner any more than he can speak as a representative black person.

Berry's book hopes to foster "the willingness to speak as and for ourselves" and to be known as ourselves rather than as types, emblems or instances of some category. He quotes William Blake's statement that "he who would do good to another must do it in minute particulars" and its corollary that "'General Good' is the plea of the scoundrel, hypocrite and flatterer." Writing, like Gaines' novel, brings the unique and unrepeatable individuality of experience to light. Pro and con dissolve in understanding, and this, he thinks, is the proper function of literature – to bring us into the presence of "the lovely possibility" of talking *with* rather than *at* one another.

The one thing in Berry's book that I am inclined to question is the way in which he uses the word *public*. With him this is often a pejorative term. "The public," he writes, "is not, except in the most remote and theoretical sense, a membership." It is "nobody's home," there is no "spirit of hospitality," its freedom is "the freedom of the richest and most powerful to reign." He approvingly quotes the essayist Paul Tenny, who defines the public as "a collection of unrelated individuals whose interactions are mediated through various shallow and transactional mechanisms, where common ground with a neighbour can only, at best, be found, in the most banal of trivialities." Elsewhere he says, "We are now defining our society as a public composed of individuals persons with no intervening structure." The opposition here between community as a hospitable membership and the public as an empty assortment of easily manipulated strangers strikes me as too stark. Berry undeniably has his roots in Port Royal, but he is also a writer who has spent his life assembling his readers into what I would like to call *publics* – with the accent on the plural rather than the singular form. He does not know and will never know most of his readers and yet they form a kind of community – an intervening structure? – nonetheless. I think my difference with him on this point might be terminological rather than substantive, and yet it might still be important. Between the mass or general public and the face-to-face community are many smaller publics, sustained by loyalties, interests and affinities that are neither entirely personal nor entirely impersonal. It is just such an assembly that Berry's book seeks, as it reaches out for readers, and I would like to call this hoped-for but always open and incomplete gathering *a* public. In this way the hollow and impersonal public that Berry deplores can be contested; the associations that mediate between the lonely crowd and the local community can find an honourable name; and a necessary concept can be retained.

Wendell Berry's book is quite explicitly addressed to his fellow Americans, but I think that Canadians will find it pertinent nonetheless, as we too are in the midst of a brutal simplification of our past, and one that has arguably struck even closer to the heart of the country than in the U.S. Take the exemplary case of Egerton Ryerson whose statue, on the grounds of the university that used to bear his name, was recently defiled and dishonoured. Ryerson was accused of being an architect of the residential school system. In fact, he was a man closely connected with indigenous people who had – to quote his entry in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* – "worked and lived alongside Ojibwa people and learned to speak the language." He counted Kahkewaquonaby (Peter Jones) as a lifelong friend and himself received the Ojibwa name Cheechock in 1826 as a tribute from the people of the Credit River among whom he had lived. A year later, writing in the American *Methodist Magazine*, he recalled "the affectionate manner in which they received me [which] removed all the strangeness of national feeling, and enabled me to embrace them as brethren, and love them as mine own people." Ryerson went on to become the architect of Upper Canada's system of public schools. He continued in conversation with indigenous leaders, and, in 1847, after wide consultation with them, he wrote a memo recommending the establishment of agricultural training schools for indigenous youth. (This was fifty years and more before there was anything even resembling the residential school system of the first half of the 20th century.) These were imagined as voluntary boarding schools which would aspire to self-sufficiency as the students learned the techniques of farming. That's the history, and that's Ryerson's crime – to have cooperated with indigenous leaders who had come to think that the uneasy entente that had prevailed between natives and newcomers in the 17th and 18th centuries was coming to an end and that they would now have to adapt to a rapidly modernizing society. However, I have not found that there is much interest in history amongst the Ryerson (now Metropolitan) faculty and students whose views I know. Excepting the handful of historians who know something about the man, most seemed eager to get the name changed and "move on" without reference to who or what

Egerton Ryerson may have been.

This case, among numerous others, embodies many of the tendencies that Berry identifies in the U.S.: extreme simplification, keen self-righteousness, uninformed contempt for the past, and a taste for vindication and victory at the expense of understanding. I find these tendencies ominous. To say what should be obvious but no longer is: the present, for good and ill, continues the past. If we don't at least try to see the past in its true colours, we will be able to form little or no idea of what we are currently doing insofar as what we are doing is inevitably shaped and constrained by the past. With the past erased and unremembered, a seemingly boundless present will lose itself in fantastic and impossible futures. These are good reasons, I think, for Canadians to attend to what Berry is saying.

A *New Yorker* profile of Berry recently reported that "several of Berry friends urged him to abandon this book" as, in his words, "a dire breach of political etiquette." (Dorothy Wickenden, "Wendell Berry's Advice for a Cataclysmic Age," Feb. 21 2022) I can see why. It's a brave book, and I imagine it cost its author more trouble than its affable style might, at first, seem to indicate. Berry speaks, by his own admission, into a "great silence," and takes his stand on a common ground that is quickly disappearing. He risks almost inevitable misunderstanding in using a word like patriotism – a word which men like Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin invoke on behalf of the very nationalism that Berry despises. But someone must speak for wholeness in world of dichotomies where one must be either a globalist or a nativist, a statist or a libertarian, a technophile or an "anti-vaxxer," because no other positions are recognized. Berry speaks for practical wisdom and practical judgment which he believes can be exercised only where people know each other as whole persons. If this should prove his final book, it will stand, in my view, as a worthy summing up of all that he has created throughout his long life.

Translations

A Dádiva da Conspiratio*

By Ivan Illich

Translation from English and German by Silke Kapp

No dia 14[1] de novembro de 1996, cheguei ao auditório do prédio da biblioteca [da universidade de Bremen] às duas em ponto, bem na hora da minha aula. Por cinco anos, havia comentado textos antigos, em busca da longa história ocidental da *philia*, da amizade. O novo semestre seria dedicado à perda do senso comunitário, à perda do senso de proporcionalidade, à decisiva ruptura na percepção sensível no tempo de Locke, Leibniz e Johann Sebastian Bach. Naquele dia, havia me preparado para falar do desaparecimento das unidades de medida autóctones, da vara, da fanga e do arrátel, que mudavam a cada alfândega.[2] Meu ponto era interpretar

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* [SK] Esta tradução partiu de duas fontes. A primeira e principal é um texto escrito por Illich em alemão, sob o mesmo título adotado aqui: "Das Geschenk der *conspiratio*" (A dádiva da *conspiratio*). Trata-se de uma homenagem ao pedagogo Johannes Beck — por ocasião de seu septuagésimo aniversário —, que, por sua vez, expande uma fala que Illich proferiu em 14 de março de 1998, na Villa Ichon, em Bremen, ao receber o Kultur- und Friedenspreis (Prêmio de Cultura e Paz) da cidade. A segunda fonte é a versão do mesmo texto em inglês, feita pelo próprio Illich, sob o título "The Cultivation of Conspiracy" (O cultivo da conspiração). Nela, novamente, ele expande o texto alemão em algumas passagens, mas omite outras. Minha tradução segue o texto alemão, porém, acrescentando-lhe trechos da versão inglesa sempre que ajudam a esclarecer o raciocínio ou a narrativa. Tais acréscimos estão assinalados em violeta.

[1] [SK] Na versão em inglês, está dia 16 de novembro.

[2] [SK] No alemão, as medidas mencionadas são *Elle*, *Scheffel* e *Wecken*. *Elle* era uma unidade de comprimento que corresponde a um antebraço e era usada especialmente na alfaiataria. Traduzo por *vara* pois, no Brasil, essa foi uma medida usual no comércio de tecidos. Dela deriva a expressão 'no varejo'. Já *Scheffel* era uma unidade de volume, usada sobretudo para grãos, variando, conforme a localidade, de menos de vinte a mais de trezentos litros. Traduzo por *fanga*,

Illich, I. A Dádiva da Conspiratio.
Conspiratio, Fall 2022, p.219-237.

o processo de 'temperamento igual' da época dos filhos de Bach como apenas uma das manifestações daquilo que então eram afinações locais.[3] Mas nada disso aconteceu. Fui impedido de dar minha aula. Meus ouvintes tinham outros planos: a comemoração do meu septuagésimo aniversário dois meses depois da data. Rimos e dançamos até à meia-noite.

A coisa começou com discursos. Sentado na primeira fila, atrás de um buquê, ouvi dezessete falas. Depois de cada uma das *laudationes*, eu tirava uma flor do buquê, em agradecimento por uma migalha de lembranças. A maioria dos oradores estava além dos cinquenta — amigos de quatro continentes. Alguns traziam reminiscências dos anos 1950, em Nova York, outros eu conheci bem mais tarde, nas aulas em Kassel, Berlim, Marburg, Oldenburg e, desde 1991, em Bremen. Enquanto eu procurava palavras apropriadas de gratidão para cada um dos oradores, me senti como Hugo de São Vítor, meu amigo e mestre de Paris por volta do ano 1135. Há uma carta em que ele chama a si mesmo de "burro de carga", mas dizendo que as amizades que depositaram em seus cestos no decorrer de sua longa peregrinação não lhe pesavam — elas lhe deram asas.

Depois das *laudationes*, atravessamos o chuvoso pátio até o GW2,[4] um prédio que sempre evitei porque parece um deserto de concreto abandonado. Já na caixa de escada o cli-

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que foi uma medida de grãos e sementes usada em Portugal, equivalendo a aproximadamente cinquenta litros. Também era chamada fanga a área necessária para o plantio do respectivo volume de sementes. *Wecken* era uma unidade usada para pesar pão, equivalendo a cerca de um quilo, mas, de novo, com muitas variações regionais. Traduzo por *arrátel*, uma unidade de peso usada em Portugal e no Brasil, e igualmente variável.

[3] [SK] Temperamento igual (no original, *gleichschwebenden Temperierung*) é o sistema de afinação musical que hoje domina absoluto, à diferença, por exemplo, dos quase extintos temperamentos pitagórico, mesotônico e irregulares.

[4] [SK] GW2, Geisteswissenschaften 2, é o prédio das Ciências Humanas na Universidade de Bremen, inaugurado em 1973. É famoso pela estrutura labiríntica que levou a diversos projetos (relativamente mal sucedidos) de comunicação visual para orientar os usuários.

ma estava diferente. Surgira um bar dançante ali: umas cinco dúzias de mesas postas, luz de velas, guardanapos coloridos. O departamento de 'economia doméstica' havia doado do orçamento semestral um panelão grande o suficiente para preparar sopa de batatas para um batalhão. O reitor, que estava em Beijing a negócios, havia financiado uma banda Klezmer.[5] Ludolf Kuchenbuch, saxofonista e decano da FernUniversität Hagen, tocava anunciando nossa entrada. Numa contribuição circense, dois palhaços e uma bicicleta parodiavam meu livro *Energy and Equity*.

Com um seleto vinho da Borgonha, tirado das profundezas do *Ratskeller*,[6] o prefeito Henning Scherf me parabenizou. Seu discurso foi de 'embriagada sobriedade', como o chamavam os bizantinos: simples e sucinto. Ele se dizia contente com o fato de que Illich, ao setenta anos, teria finalmente encontrado em Bremen um "pedacinho de lar [*ein Zipfel Heimat*]". Ele me citava. Da boca do prefeito, a frase soava grotesca, mas verdadeira. Imaginem só isso: um lar aqui, nessa chuva gelada! Comecei a pensar: como eu pude encontrar o "pedacinho de lar" nos longos e sombrios invernos de Bremen ou nos prados do rio Wümme, diariamente alagados pela maré? Eu que, quando garoto, senti Viena como um exílio nórdico, porque meus sentidos dalmacianos estavam apegados ao carste branco, às oliveiras e ao adriático da primeira infância.[7]

A festa desta manhã, aqui na Villa Ichon junto ao parque do fosso,[8] é ainda mais inacreditável do que o evento do ano passado. Jamais pensei que teria uma segunda recepção assim em Bremen, junto com laureados pacifistas e agentes culturais nativos desta cidade: Helmut Donat, Karl Fruchtmann, Will Quadflieg e Helmut Haffner. Jamais pensei que seria bem vindo, não apenas às respeitáveis autoridades, mas aos comerciantes de Bremen. A Villa Ichon é um testemunho da cultura urbana de Bremen — não de filantropia privada nem de administração pública. Vocês, meus anfitriões, entendem a si mesmos como mercadores hanseáticos, como cidadãos com 'poder das chaves'.[9] No dia da inauguração da Villa Ichon, não deixaram que nenhuma autoridade tocasse suas chaves. Para mim, a Villa Ichon é a prancha que dá acesso à "balsa das coisas frágeis e vulneráveis", como Klaus Hübotter chamou este lugar. Insistindo na própria autonomia, vocês acentuam a diferença de que quero falar hoje — a diferença entre a sociedade civil e o governo municipal, entre o 'nós' livre e o 'nós' administrado. Emociona-me profundamente que este prêmio, destinado a cidadãos de Bremen, hoje seja conferido a mim, o peregrino, o primogênito de uma família de comerciantes numa cidade portuária que por séculos conquistou e reconquistou sua liberdade entre as duas potências do Adriático, Veneza e Bizâncio. Minha origem pertence a um mundo cuja herança quase desapareceu, mas que me torna receptivo à hospitalidade hanseática. A iniciativa de vocês me mostra que sobrevive aqui uma proporcionalidade entre a hospitalidade fugidia e sempre nova, e uma ordem que se perpetua para além dela.

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[5] [SK] Klezmer é um gênero de música judaica não litúrgica.

[6] [SK] *Ratskeller* é, tradicionalmente, um bar ou restaurante no porão de uma prefeitura (*Rathaus*). O *Ratskeller* de Bremen, construído no início do século XV, é célebre por sua adega, uma das mais antigas do mundo e que foi centro do comércio de vinho em Bremen por muito tempo.

[7] [SK] Illich viveu a primeira infância na Dalmácia, na costa leste do mar Adriático.

[8] [SK] A Villa Ichon, onde Illich recebeu o prêmio que mencionei na nota 1, é um prédio histórico de Bremen, construído em meados do século XIX, como residência. Hoje é patrimônio municipal e abriga, além de um restaurante, as sedes de diversas

Aos meus seis anos de idade, Bremen entrou pela pri-

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organizações culturais e pacifistas. A Villa fica próxima a um parque cuja origem é um fosso construído em torno das muralhas da cidade, provavelmente já no século XI. No início do século XIX, por iniciativa popular, a área foi transformada em parque público, sem as muralhas, mas mantendo-se o corpo d'água formado pelo antigo fosso.

[9] [SK] O original, *Schlüsselgewalt*, designa o poder dos cônjuges de dispôr e decidir acerca do patrimônio familiar. Em português, a tradução literal que usei aqui — poder das chaves — significa, na verdade, o poder de admitir ou excluir membros da igreja católica.

meira vez na minha imaginação como referência nórdica. Minha professora de Artes, a senhora Pfeiffer-Kuhlenkampf, vinha de uma família patrícia de Bremen, e em Viena sofria de saudades do norte. Num verão, ela viajou conosco à Dalmácia, a Spalato, como hóspede das muralhas do Palácio de Diocleciano.[10] Lá me mostrou a diferença entre as misturas da aquarela azul para o Adriático e para o mar do Norte.

E agora estou em casa aqui, no clima salgado e cinzento da tia Pfeiffer-Kuhlenkampf. E não apenas 'em casa' — gosto de pensar que minha presença em Bremen refresca a atmosfera da universidade. Quando Johannes Beck, então decano da Faculdade de Ciências Humanas e Educação, me levou por aquele pátio molhado até o improvisado bar dançante, ele disse algo que tomo como um presente: "Ivan, aquilo ali está com o cheiro da Kreftingstraße!". Seu comentário me assegurou que, aqui em Bremen, consegui algo que almejei por décadas — fazer a atmosfera da mesa de comensais penetrar nas salas da universidade. Sente-se a aura da hospitalidade de Barbara Duden na 'Kreftingstraße' bem além de nossa soleira.

Outras atmosferas surgiram à minha volta, mas nunca como aqui, desde 1991. Porque aqui essa aura me sustenta e persiste, muito intensamente na casa Duden e em toda aula para a qual a universidade me permite convidar ouvintes. O prêmio de vocês deve nos ajudar a coletar a condensação dessa atmosfera, se Silja Samerski tornar possível encaminhar versões escritas das nossas conversas também a pessoas ausentes aqui.

Ainda antes do início do meu primeiro semestre em Bremen, Barbara Duden conseguiu uma casa no bairro do Ostertor, além do velho fosso, logo atrás da esquina das drogas, do mercado dos agricultores e do bairro turco. Ali, Barbara criou um ambiente de austera alegria. A casa se tornou um lugar que, num piscar de olhos, dá conta de acomodar nossos hóspedes. Se, depois das minhas aulas nas sextas-feiras, a panela de espaguetes precisa alimentar mais do que as duas dúzias de pessoas que cabem em volta da mesa de madeira de soalho, os convidados se sentam nos cobertores mexicanos da sala ao lado.

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[10] A cidade de Spalato ou Split é a segunda maior da atual Croácia e é considerada a capital da região da Dalmácia. O Palácio de Diocleciano, na verdade um imenso complexo fortificado, foi construído a partir do século IV, e suas muralhas e edificações ainda hoje estruturam toda a área central de Spalato.

Com o passar dos anos, nossa ‘Kreftingstraße’ fomentou uma proximidade privilegiada, em interações respeitosas, disciplinadas e críticas: amizades de velhos conhecidos que vinham de longe, e amizades novas, com pessoas três ou até quatro décadas mais jovens do que meu mais antigo companheiro, Ceslaus Hoinacki, que divide seu quarto com nossas enciclopédias. A amizade torna únicos os laços, mas alguns carregam o fardo do anfitrião mais do que outros. Kassandra, que mora em outro lugar, tem as chaves da casa e sempre traz as flores; e Mathias, o baterista virtuoso que vive no porão, no quarto que dá para o pequeno jardim, é um dos muitos igualmente dispostos a receber o recém-chegado à porta, mexer a sopa, orientar uma conversa, lavar a louça e corrigir manuscritos meus e de outros.

Hospitalidade generosa e relaxada é o único antídoto contra a postura de mortífera esperteza que se adquire na perseguição professional de conhecimento objetivamente assegurado. Continuo certo de que nenhuma busca da verdade floresce sem que seja alimentada pela confiança mútua que desabrocha no compromisso da amizade. Por isso tenho tentado identificar o clima que fomenta o crescimento da amizade e o ‘ar condicionado’ que o impede.

É claro que me lembro do sabor de atmosferas marcantes de outras épocas da minha vida. Nunca duvidei — hoje menos ainda — do fato de que uma postura ascética é precondição para a descoberta do nonsense cotidiano; que apenas essa postura possibilita uma recusa historicamente fundamentada às modas intelectuais. Apenas onde as pessoas se ajudam mutuamente a não precisar de quase nada, elas se tornam capazes de rir das necessidades. Apenas o compromisso gratuito dos amigos me torna capaz de praticar o ascetismo requerido para os quase-paradoxos modernos, como o paradoxo de rejeitar a análise de sistemas enquanto digito no meu Toshiba.

Minha suspeita de juventude, de que o *studium* a que me dedicava pressupunha atmosfera, tornou-se uma convicção quando o Sputnik russo provocou uma avalanche de dinheiro nas universidades estadunidenses. Depois de um ano como vice-reitor da universidade de Puerto Rico, em 1957, passei a questionar a ideologia do desenvolvimento que movia Kennedy e Mao, o Papa e Castro. Pus todo o dinheiro que tinha — hoje equivalente ao prêmio que vocês estão me conferindo — na compra de uma minúscula cabana de madeira, entre bananeiras e uma vista para o mar do Caribe. Com três amigos, queria criar uma 'pensaria'[11] em que todo emprego do pronome pessoal *nos-otros* seria, verdadeiramente, uma referência a nós quatro. À sua mesa qualquer hóspede sentiria a singularidade corpórea de um 'nós' aberto. Junto com o chapéu, todo hóspede deveria livrar-se também da segurança daquele 'nós' inflado do sociólogo, do nacionalista, do político. Como Charlie Rosario, um de nós quatro, disse à sua companheira, a mulata Belen: "institutos fedem — no melhor dos casos, a desinfetante, e a uma aura envenenada, esterilizada". *La casita* no caminho das montanhas de Adjuntas logo se tornou notória, e eu tive que deixar a ilha.

Assim, estava livre para recomeçar uma 'pensaria' no México, que, cinco anos depois, se tornou o CIDOC. Ainda hoje cedo, na fala introdutória a esta celebração, o deputado Freimut Duve — que naquela época era meu editor na Rowohlt e me visitou no México várias vezes —mencionou a atmosfera do CIDOC: um clima de benevolência mutuamente afinada. O CIDOC logo se tornou ponto de encontro de pessoas que questionavam a inocência da empreitada desenvolvimentista muito antes de isso se tornar moda. Nas palavras de Duve, aquela aura explica a influência que nossa pensaria provisória exerceu sobre a crítica das consequências do darwinismo social.

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[11] O original, *Denkerei*, seria um lugar onde se produz pensamento, como na padaria (*Bäckerei*) se produz pão. Daí minha opção por 'pensaria'.

Fechamos o CIDOC, em comum acordo, no dia primeiro de abril, exatamente dez anos depois de sua fundação. Comemoramos o seu fim com música e dança mexicanas. Freimut Duve lhes falou de Valentina Borremans. Ela coordenou o CIDOC desde a fundação, e Duve se disse impressionado pelo estilo de Valentina ao encerrar esse empreendimento em concordância com os sessenta e três colaboradores. Ela sabia que a alma dessa pensaria livre, independente e impotente teria sido destruída se sua influência crescesse mais.

Fechamos o CIDOC, contrariando as críticas veementes da maioria dos amigos sérios, incapazes de compreender os paradoxos da atmosfera. Eram sobretudo pessoas às quais a hospitalidade do CIDOC havia oferecido, por alguns anos, um fórum muito especial. Elas não queriam acreditar naquilo que nós sabíamos: que a atmosfera seduz à institucionalização, que a sufoca. Não se pode prever o que o espírito da *philia* despertará, mas pode-se prever o que o estrangula. A aura é uma surpresa, e é um milagre quando ela persiste. As tentativas de assegurar e utilizar a aura a envenenam.

Poucos estão dispostos a entender isso. Abri o vinho do prefeito de Bremen com Valentina, no México, para brindar a um amigo falecido cuja simplicidade emitia uma aura: Alejandro Del Corro, um jesuíta argentino, que havia trabalhado comigo desde os anos 1960. Sempre com sua Laica, ele viajou por toda a América Latina, negociando e colaborando com chefes da guerrilha para salvar seus arquivos para a posteridade. Alejandro era um mestre na moderação da aura. Quando conduzia um encontro, sua cuidadosa atenção criava confiança mútua entre o guerrilheiro, o diplomata estadunidense, o mendigo e o professor, sentados à mesma mesa do CIDOC. Alejandro sabia que não se pode possuir a aura, sabia da fugacidade, da volatilidade da atmosfera.

Digo atmosfera na falta de melhor termo. Em grego, essa é a palavra que designa a emanação de uma estrela, a constelação que governa um lugar. Os alquimistas chamavam de 'atmosfera' as camadas em torno do nosso planeta. Os franceses se referem ao *bouquet des esprits* como o espírito de uma mesa de comensais. Apesar de sua delicadeza, a atmosfera é algo muito real, determinante. Eu uso a palavra para algo frágil e frequentemente negligenciado, o ar que emana e entretece, e evoca memórias. Nós nos lembramos dela, da mesma maneira que a aura do vinho da Borgonha continua ecoando tempos depois de esvaziada a garrafa.

Para sentir a aura é preciso, antes de tudo, um nariz. O nariz salta da testa, entre os olhos, e o que ele inala penetra no escuro, afeta o ventre, vai ao âmago. Qualquer iogue ou hesicasta sabe disso. E os judeus sabem que o nariz se curva no meio do rosto, pois aquilo que os cristão traduzem por "andar sob as vistas de Deus", em hebraico é "caminhar sob o sopro do nariz de Deus". Precisamos de 'faro' para saber onde estamos; precisamos contar com o nariz para confiar; precisamos sentir o cheiro do outro para saber se o suportamos.

No início, a cultura cívica ocidental oscilou entre culta desconfiança e simpática confiança. Platão duvidava que muita proximidade fizesse bem aos cidadãos de Atenas. Não considerava de bom tom que, no teatro, o cidadão se deixasse afetar até as entranhas pela paixão dos atores. Exigia que o frequentador do teatro educasse a si mesmo para agir como espectador distante (*theoretes*), não como místico. Na *Poética*, Aristóteles criticou essa exigência de seu mestre e defendeu o compartilhamento da experiência trágica, que chamava de *mimesis*. O participante no teatro deveria vibrar junto com aquilo que os gestos, a mímica, o tom de voz, a respiração e a melodia dos atores lhe oferecesse; deveria vibrar junto com o que vai além das palavras. Não deveria apenas entender, e sim se deixar afetar. Para Aristóteles, sem essa participação na atmosfera trágica, não haveria *katharsis*: a purificação dos sentidos, a reviravolta do coração. Quem não é atingido pelo outro até as entranhas não ultrapassa a si mesmo.

No alemão coloquial, essa *mimesis* ressoa quando alguém diz '*Ich kann Dich gut riechen*'.[12] Não se diz isso a qualquer um. Cheirar alguém pressupõe proximidade, confiança e suscetibilidade. Tais palavras olfativas nunca desapareceram completamente da linguagem cotidiana, nem mesmo nos tempos do banho diário. Se suporto bem o seu cheiro, 'suporto' bem você — eis algo que só se pode dizer em alemão.[13]

Eu me lembro de como fiquei envergonhado quando finalmente descobri que até então, mesmo depois de anos de ascética disciplina, havia ignorado a ligação íntima de nariz e coração, odor e afeto. Eu realmente havia agido como se fosse possível criar proximidade mantendo o nariz tapado! Isso mudou repentinamente, numa noite de meados dos anos 1950, quando eu voltava para a miserável cabana de Jaime, onde estava hospedado. Tinha que atravessar o rio Rímac, a *cloaca maxima* de Lima. A ideia de passar mais algumas noites no miasma do barranco sobre o canal, como hóspede num canto da casa de Jaime, me dava arrepios. E, de repente, surgiu a *katharsis*, a compreensão do que Carlos vinha me dizendo havia tempos: “Ivan, não se iluda; não pense que você pode ser amigo das pessoas se não suporta o cheiro delas!”. Na soleira de Jaime, meu nariz já não estava obstruído. Finalmente, pude dar minha própria contribuição à atmosfera do meu anfitrião.

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[12] [SK] Literalmente, a expressão se traduziria por algo como 'bem consigo cheirar você', e ela significa 'gosto de você'. Não há equivalente em português, mas o ponto em questão se reflete em outras expressões, como 'isso não está me cheirando bem'.

[13] [SK] A expressão em alemão a que Illich se refere, *ich kann dich gut leiden*, tem sentido afetuoso: novamente, 'gosto de você'. Mas sua tradução literal seria 'bem consigo sofrer (suportar) você'.

Quando foi isso? Há quarenta anos, na época do [avião] DC-4, da ingênua fúria desenvolvimentista, da crença na benção dos Peace Corps; no tempo em que o DDT ainda era caro demais para favelados latino-americanos, e os pobres ainda tinham que aguentar pulgas e piolhos; no tempo em que o cheiro de velhos, aleijados e idiotas ainda era tolerado em casa. Foi antes do xerox, do fax e do e-mail, antes do *smog* e da AIDS. Naquela época, eu era considerado um derrotista quando acentuava os efeitos colaterais indesejados do desenvolvimento, quando falava aos sindicalistas do desemprego tecnológico e falava aos esquerdistas da desigualdade crescente entre ricos e pobres em consequência dos novos meios de produção. Naquela época, ainda era coisa de gente esquisita lamentar as perdas irreparáveis que se tornaram inevitáveis: horrores como o *global warming* e a medicina cancerígena.

O que então pareciam fantasias histéricas são hoje fato mais do que documentados. Vivemos no rumo da colisão com o iceberg, acostumados a horrores antes inimagináveis. Eles precisam ser exorcizados. Apostamos nos rituais dos congressos científicos, da prevenção, da grande pesquisa, que conjuram, interditam e banalizam o horror. O que me preocupa hoje é que, nessa dança, os esqueletos tanto quanto os violinos distraem daquilo que quero discutir: a perda de ‘atmosfera’. Essa perda da aura, do clima humano, do ‘cheiro’, me parece ainda mais horrível do que a ameaçadora mudança climática, o sumiço do ozônio, das corujas e dos idiomas, a crescente imunidade dos patógenos, o desaparecimento dos empregos, a multiplicação de mercadorias úteis para seres humanos tornados inúteis.

Esse medo é a razão pela qual arrisco perturbar vocês com minhas lembranças de uma caminhada ao entardecer, minhas lembranças do cheiro de urina e fezes emanado do Rímac. Aquela paisagem não existe mais. Os carros correm sobre o esgoto, agora canalizado. Na pele e na cabeça dos *indios* já não habitam pulgas e piolhos; hoje são as alergias produzidas pela química industrial que provocam as coceiras. Os barracos autoconstruídos deram lugar a habitações sociais públicas. Todo apartamento tem privada e geladeira, todo morador tem sua própria cama — e o hóspede sabe o quanto é inconveniente. As emanações do Rímac se tornaram memórias numa cidade asfixiada pela poluição industrial. O que me assusta é que a perda da 'atmosfera' fica esquecida em meio a tudo isso. Comparo o agora ao outrora porque isso me permite argumentar que a iminente perda de espírito, de alma, do que chamo de atmosfera, poderá passar despercebida.

Quero manter acesa a saudade dessa coisa frágil e volátil, a coisa corriqueira que está ameaçada porque não sabemos como chamá-la. Foi mais ou menos isso que Hilde Osthaus me disse pouco antes de sua morte. Somente aqueles que vão ao encontro uns dos outros com confiança conseguem deixar emergir uma atmosfera.[14] O hálito inominado da amizade varia a cada respiração. Por muito tempo acreditei que não haveria nenhuma palavra precisa para isso, certamente nenhum verbo. A cada vez que ensaiava alguma, ficava inseguro; a publicidade desgastou todos os seus sinônimos. A indústria supre o cotidiano de auras, de coisas repletas de atmosfera sintética. Assim como as vitaminas, vendem-se estimulantes de sentimentos, com styling, design e sugestões subliminares. Não apenas os cremes para a pele, os cigarros e as viagens, também os cursos universitários e os banheiros emanam algo artificial. A produção de 'clima', de atmosfera é comercializável: desde os anos 1970, dinâmicas de grupo, atividades físicas e cultos fazem a sua parte. Por muito tempo, achei melhor ficar calado para não gerar mais confusão.

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[14] [SK] Em português se diz que alguém *inspira* confiança.

Trinta anos depois daquele entardecer sobre o Rímac, eu soube de repente que poderia nomear aquilo que queria proteger e cultivar com uma palavra muito simples, e essa palavra é 'paz'. Não a paz nos sentidos em que hoje é negociada internacionalmente, e sim paz no seu peculiar sentido pós-clássico, europeu. No início achei forçado, pois o substantivo 'a paz' não dá conta disso. Mas depois percebi que 'pacífico' ['*friedlich*'] significa muito mais do que livre de violência. Designa a atmosfera da amizade que cresce entre iguais. E para compreender esse sentido da pacificidade [*Friedfertigkeit*], precisei descobrir sua origem na *conspiratio*, esse estranho comportamento ritual hoje esquecido.

Foi assim: em 1986, três dúzias de centros de pesquisa da paz, na África e na Ásia, pretendiam fundar uma confederação. A assembléia de fundação foi realizada no Japão. Na busca por um palestrante do terceiro mundo, lembraram-se de mim, pois não deveria ser ninguém da Ásia nem da África, e me engajaram como latino-americano. Depois de alguma insistência, aceitei, peguei minha *guyabera*, a camisa típica da América Latina, e fiz a viagem que me parecia tão esquisita quanto importante.

Em Yokohama fiz a palestra, falando como historiador. Sobretudo, eu queria desmanchar o conceito universal de paz; queria acentuar que cada *ethnos* tem o direito de ser deixado em paz — na sua paz. Parecia importante esclarecer que a paz não é um estado abstrato, e sim uma coisa especialmente delicada de que cada comunidade usufrui somente na sua especificidade única e inefável.

Minha intenção em Yokohama era dupla. Eu queria examinar não apenas o sentido, mas também a história e as inversões da paz naquele continente, apêndice da Asia e da África, que chamamos de Europa. Afinal, a maior parte do mundo do século xx sofre de infecções cujos portadores são conceitos europeus, e 'paz' é um desses conceitos. Fui ao Japão e falei do conceito europeu de paz, da maravilhosa singularidade daquilo que um dia foi o entendimento europeu da 'paz'. E falei da corrupção de uma paz tornada subproduto do 'desenvolvimento', quando crescimento econômico, escolarização, diagnósticos médicos e administração global erradicam justamente aquilo que, aqui na Europa, na nossa tradição, um dia se entendeu por paz. Apenas se tirarmos a paz (*pax*) das garras do empreendimento desenvolvimentista, virá à luz a extraordinária maravilha que, por milênios, esteve contida na palavra *pax*. Por isso dei à palestra o título "De-linking Peace and Development" [Desvinculando paz e desenvolvimento]. Mas falar aos japoneses sobre a história desse ideal pacifista europeu foi difícil, para não dizer constrangedor.

Em japonês, há um ideograma e uma palavra para algo que não temos no Ocidente, algo que nem sabemos como dizer ou experienciar — *foodo*. Meu anfitrião e mestre, Joshiro Tamanoy, me explicou o *foodo*: "o frescor inigualável que surge da mistura de uma água específica com o respectivo solo". Confiando no meu agora já falecido anfitrião pacifista, comecei pelo conceito de *foodo*. Não foi difícil mostrar que tanto a *philia* ateniense quanto a *pax romana*, por mais diferentes que sejam entre si, nada têm em comum com *foodo*. A *philia* designava a amizade entre os homens livres de uma cidade, e a *pax romana*, o status administrativo de uma região em que as legiões haviam plantado seus estandartes. Graças à ajuda do professor Tamonoy, foi fácil detalhar as contradições e diferenças entre essas duas noções e levar a audiência a fazer comentários sobre heteronomias similares no significado cultural de paz no interior da Índia ou entre grupos vizinhos na Tanzânia. As incarnações caleidoscópicas da paz se referiam todas a alguma atmosfera particular, altamente desejável. Até aí, tudo bem.

A coisa começou a ficar constrangedora apenas quando me pus a falar da *pax* na época proto-cristã, pois, por volta do ano 300, *pax* havia se tornado palavra-chave na liturgia cristã. A *pax conspirativa* era um eufemismo para o beijo na boca entre os fiéis reunidos na missa: *pax* se tornara um disfarce para o *osculum* (de *os*, boca) ou a *conspiratio*, a mesclagem de hálitos. Meu amigo achou que, ao mencionar tal contato corporal em público, eu não estava apenas arriscando criar mal-entendidos, mas talvez ofendendo a platéia. No Japão, aquele gesto tem algo de ofensivo, pois provoca nojo a ideia de encostar os lábios nos de outrem para trocar hálitos.

De resto, a palavra latina para esse beijo, o *osculum*, não é antiga nem muito frequente. É apenas uma das três palavras que podem ser traduzidas por 'beijo'. Em comparação com o afetuoso *basium* e o lascivo *suavium*, o *osculum* é um retardatário no latim clássico. O termo era usado somente para um único gesto ritual, a saber, o beijo diante do juiz, com que um soldado de partida reconhecia o fruto esperado por uma mulher como filho seu.

Na liturgia cristã do primeiro século, o *osculum* assumiu uma nova função. O auge da liturgia cristã, na celebração da eucaristia, estava em dois gestos: *conspiratio* e *commestio*. Na *conspiratio* — o beijo fraterno, isto é, a união de *spiritus*, respiração ou 'espírito' —, os celebrantes se tornavam uma comunidade no Espírito Santo, no sopro de Deus. A *ecclesia* surgia por meio de uma ação ritual pública, a liturgia, e a alma dessa liturgia era a *conspiratio*. Explícita e fisicamente, a celebração cristã era entendida como uma co-respiração, uma con-spiração, a criação de uma atmosfera comum, um meio social divino. O outro momento eminente da celebração era, é claro, a *commestio*, a comunhão na carne, a incorporação do fiel no corpo da Palavra incarnada. Mas a *communio* era teologicamente vinculada à *conspiratio* que a precedia. A *conspiratio* seguida de *commestio* era a expressão somática mais clara, forte e evidente da criação não hierárquica de um espírito fraternal num corpo, em preparação para a ceia unificadora. Pelo ato de comer, os companheiros conspiradores eram transformados num 'nós', na reunião que, em grego, é *ecclesia*. Além disso, acreditavam que o 'nós' também seria o 'eu' de alguém; eram alimentados pela fusão no 'eu' da Palavra incarnada. As palavras e ações da liturgia não são apenas palavras e ações mundanas, e sim eventos que ocorrem depois da Palavra, depois da incarnação. Paz como a mesclagem de solo e água soa lindo aos meus ouvidos, mas paz como o resultado de *conspiratio* requer uma intimidade exigente, hoje quase inimaginável. Portanto, pode-se compreender o primeiro cristianismo como um movimento fundado na capacidade de qualquer pessoa para criar comunidade a partir da própria entrega. Era um movimento em que, do amor corpóreo de uns pelos outros, derivava a emergência de um 'nós' (um 'eu' plural).

O gesto do *osculum* não deixou de gerar controvérsias. Os documentos mostram que a *conspiratio* logo se tornou escândalo. O azedo africano Tertuliano, padre da igreja, quis abolir o beijo para não ofender as matronas que vinham à comunhão. A prática persistiu, mas com outro nome; o ritual exigia um eufemismo. Desde o final do século III, *pax* se tornou o eufemismo para *osculum pacis*. Até hoje, a *pax* antes da comunhão, o chamado beijo da paz [ou ósculo santo], é parte da missa romana, eslava, grega e síria, ainda que tenha sido reduzido a um breve aperto de mão.

Não pude deixar de contar essa história hoje, aqui em Bremen, assim como outrora em Yokohama. Por que? Porque a própria ideia de paz, entendida como hospitalidade que se estende ao estrangeiro e como congregação que emerge da prática da hospitalidade, não pode ser compreendida sem referência à liturgia cristã na qual a comunidade surge pelo beijo na boca. Porque a ideia de uma sociedade que emerge da vontade de todos os seus membros, e à qual nós nos habituamos como algo evidente, precisa ser compreendida a partir da *conspiratio* litúrgica. Nada se assemelha à comunidade entendida como incorporação somática de iguais, isto é, uma comunidade que não é fruto de um ato autoritário de fundação, nem um presente da natureza ou dos deuses, nem resultado de gerenciamento, planejamento e design, e sim consequência de uma cuidadosa dádiva mútua. A forma original dessa fundação comunitária é a conspiração, a celebração da primeira liturgia cristã em que todos, não importando sua origem, homens e mulheres, gregos e judeus, escravos e cidadãos livres, criam uma realidade pacífica que os ultrapassa: *conspiratio* incarnada, um 'nós' visível, que emerge do *osculum pacis*, do hálito conjunto.

Historiadores mostraram que a origem concreta da ideia de um contrato social, que domina o pensamento político da Europa desde o século XIV, está na maneira como os fundadores das cidades medievais concebiam a civilidade urbana. Certamente, a forma jurídica civil do contrato social se formou nas cidades medievais: nelas está a origem de uma sociedade fixada por contrato. Na 'aurora da Europa', à sombra dos castelos feudais, mercadores e artífices confraternizaram para formar um novo corpo social [*Gemeinwesen*]: uma cidade cujo espírito se tornou, pela vontade de seus cidadãos, uma comunidade sólida, cercada [*umfriedet*[15]]. Não tenho dúvida de que essa espécie inédita de fundação comunitária de um corpo político e econômico, no século XII, não se explica senão pelo hábito, cultivado por muitas gerações, da celebração da conspiração litúrgica.

Mas esse aspecto *CONSPIRAtivo* na fundação das novas cidades 'democráticas' é quase sempre esquecido na história urbana. Os historiadores põem ênfase no aspecto contratual: no contrato que deve dar estabilidade à paz urbana, isto é, na *CONJURATIO* — uma promessa recíproca reforçada por um juramento. Concentrando-se no aspecto contratual dessa incorporação, os historiadores desviam a atenção do bem que tais contratos deveriam proteger, a saber, a paz resultante da *conspiratio*. Não se pode deixar de notar o pretensioso absurdo que é a tentativa de assegurar por contrato uma atmosfera tão volátil e viva, tão delicada e robusta quanto a *pax*.

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[15] [SK] Em alemão, *Einfriedung* ou *Umfriedung* é uma cerca, grade ou muralha que delimita e, quase sempre, fecha um território, seja um lote ou uma cidade. Sua etimologia é a mesma da palavra *Frieden*, paz, sugerindo que o no interior do território cercado se está em paz, protegido das ameaças externas.

Os mercadores e artífices que se assentaram aos pés de um castelo feudal sentiram a necessidade de fazer a conspiração que os uniria numa associação segura e permanente. Para alcançar essa garantia geral, puderam recorrer a um dispositivo, a *conjuratio*, uma promessa mútua confirmada por um juramento que tem Deus por testemunha. A maioria das sociedades conhece o *juramentum*, o juramento em que o jurado amaldiçoa a si mesmo, caso não cumpra com sua palavra. No juramento, o camponês põe a mão na sua genitália ou o pé na terra, o normando põe o pé no seu barco, a mulher segura sua trança, para que a palavra dada seja incorporada. Isso não basta aos jurados urbanos: eles usam o nome de Deus como aglutinante de sua palavra. O uso do nome de Deus para fazer valer o juramento aparece pela primeira vez como dispositivo legal na codificação da lei romana feita pelo imperador cristão Teodosio. A 'conjuração', o juramento conjunto confirmado pela invocação de Deus, é de origem cristã, da mesma maneira que o *osculum* litúrgico. A *conjuratio*, que chama a Deus como testemunha do laço social, deve assegurar estabilidade e permanência a uma atmosfera que, por princípio, terá sido fundada antes pela *conspiratio* dos cidadãos. No nexo de *conspiratio* e *conjuratio*, esses dois conceitos peculiares herdados do primeiro milênio da história cristã estão entrelaçados, mas o último, a forma contratual, logo ofusca a substância espiritual.

Portanto, a cidade medieval da Europa central tinha uma configuração bipartida: a de *conjuratio conspirativa*, de ‘atmosfera conjurada’, o que a distingue de todos os outros modos de existência urbanos. Havia ali uma tensão dinâmica entre a atmosfera da *conspiratio*, a delicada e volátil pacificação [*Be- und Umfriedung*], e sua constituição contratual na *conjuratio*, a exigência de renovada respiração da cidade cercada. Idealmente, o clima espiritual é a fonte da vida urbana que desabrocha numa hierarquia, como uma concha ou moldura, para proteger a sua ordem. A cidade concebida como oriunda de uma *conspiratio* deve sua existência social à *pax*, a respiração compartilhada por todos.

A comparação de Klaus Hübotter da Villa Ichon com uma balsa me fez pensar na essência da atmosfera, e isso nos levou a essa longa história sobre a origem da cidade a partir da ‘paz’ entre cidadãos que praticam uma peculiar hospitalidade recíproca; e não apenas recíproca — afinal, vocês também convidaram este peregrino a compartilhar o espírito daqui! Como acadêmico, fui formado por uma tradição monástica e pela interpretação de textos medievais. Percebi cedo que uma atmosfera propícia ao pensamento autônomo pressupõe hospitalidade: a arte de ser anfitrião e a arte de se sentir convidado; sem condescendência nem pressão; simples e até ingênua, de modo que a conversa logo faz esquecer quem pensou o que; respeitosa e sem timidez. Fui generosamente presenteado. Experimentei afinidades relaxadas, engraçadas e às vezes grotescas entre amigos completamente comuns ou muito extravagantes, entre seres humanos que são pacientes uns com os outros. Em Bremen, na casa que você, Barbara, criou; em Bremen, Johannes, a seu convite, pude usufruir disso mais do que em qualquer outro lugar.

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